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» STORIES «

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VALLEY OF THE BLACK SUN (Short)by Leroy Yerxa. "You have no future!" was Eban Vale's astounding statement when she peared it	nto her crystal bal	
ENIGMA OF THE CITY (Novelet)by Chester S. Gel All their hopes had been pinned on finding this world unpopulated, then they	found a great cit	
NEVER TRUST A DEMON (Short)by Robert Bloch. You can call up demons if you wish, and if you know how—but be careful about	14	,
GOLD RUSH ON CALLISTO (Short)by Russell Storm. Mr. Striff was strange, but he figured it was Earthmen who were screwy when they	17	4
DAUGHTER OF DESTINY (Novelet)by Lee Francis Just how much power would a worran have, if she were the only one of her sex le	ift on the Earth?	4
PERISCOPE PREY (Short)	O'Rrian 91	4

» FEATURES «

Natural Gos Goes To Wor	7	Feeding Ulcers To Save The Patient	2
Tire Magicl	123	The Bottle Of The Seizes	21
Than's Gold	162	Scientific Mysteries	25
Amazing Foets	163	Meet The Authors	21
Army Develops New Butter	174	Discussions	21
Scientific Oddities	175	Correspondence Corner	23
Vignettes Of Famous Scientists	188	Stories Of The Sters	24

Free! over pointing by Robert Facus, Illiamating a scene face "That World: May Live"
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to 11. New years often and the first state of the control of the c

Number 4



Truths That Have Been Denied Struggling Humanity COR every word that has left the lips of bishops or states

men to enlighten man, a thousand have been withheld. For every book publicly exposed to the inquiring mind, one hundred more have been suppressed-damned to oblision. Each yer of process has been withilly delived centuries. Wisdom council meetings, where high dignituries of state and church one proclaimed what man should know. Are you prepared to demand the hidden facts of life? Will on continue to believe that you are not capable of weighing the worth of knowledge that concerns your personal freedom and hoppiness? Realize that much that can make your life more understandable and lisable has been left unexplained or

intentionally destroyed. At first by word of mouth only, and new by private discourses, are rescaled those truths which secret brotherhoods preserved in ancient temples and hidden sanctuaries, from those who rought to selfably deprive humanity of them.

THIS free BOOK OF EXPLANATION Let the Rosicrucians, one of these ancient brotherhoods of

sarning, tell you about these amazing truths, and explain how you, too, like thousands of others, may now use them to enjoy the fallness of life. The Rosicruzians, (not a re-ligious organization) invite you to use the coupon opposite and receive the FREE copy of the functioning, Scaled Book, with its startling tale of help,

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AHIS S. IT, readout The faces have of Assarance Strans ever to hit the stands. Assarance Strans ever to hit the stands had no increase in fines. Very two this had need to be week 100 from two years ago; in the contract of two average poly magazines. But give whatever the value in each, we think it can sever quality the attributional value we've enumered until the properties of the average poly magazines. But give whatever the value in each, we think it can sever a contract of the average poly magazine. But give whatever the value in each, we think it can several the standard value we've enumered until the contract of the value of of the valu

LAST month we told you we'd have a big tour for April, with \$10 pages. Well, we haven't kept our word, and we owe you an apology, but we know you'll forgive us when we tell you we shandoed the big issue for urgare reasons—because Uncle Sain can no longer supply us with the amount of pulp paper we had last your. However, we still present Bond's complete novel and seven other secrably selected stories as we planned.



"Boy! Some chassis!"

Four other stories will be carried over to the May issue and you'll get them anyway.

TWO years ago, when we amounced our big in the Americanary issue, doubting Thomass ear" on the residence. What happened then is bittory. Assance Streams deepted the big size permanently. Now, in colebration of that fast, we give you another special issue, which represents now to the property of the what we said two years ago, every steps in the what we said two years ago, every steps in the act the less every class if you are the property of the said the less every class if you are

Take for instance the lead novel, by Nelson S. Hond. "That Warlds May Lave" heiffled us to the core when we read it. It is a planetary story of such sheer, succepting power that we predict you'll name it Bend's best, and you know yourself that's calking big. But Bend is big, and when we run a yarn of his, we have confidence in your fewords commends.

POPULAR "character" for April is the irrepressible Juggernaut Joses. A. R. McKenris gives us "Juggernaut Jones, Warrior" this time, and the redoubtable little fellow sells plenty of his Unsek Fixers again, but has a little battling to do to out the deal across.

SPECIAL mention surely should go to Chester S. Geier for his "Enigma of the City." It is a yarn we'd have been proud to have written ourselves. It's got the old glamor that made science fettion what it is today.

SEVERAL of our stories this month have a "special" atmospher. We'll group them: "Valley of the Black Sun," a clever little story by Levey Yerax takes a very usual theres and tollines. Sevel a very usual thirt special policy to be too treating, and example the policy policy to be too treating, and example, we have Such "Sever Traits a Demon"; and lartly we have Such sell Storm's odd character, Mr. Smith, in "Gold ("Goldmand on some 1081.")

NATURAL GAS GOES TO WAR

By EARL HERBERT

Some amazing facts about a very commonplace thing in our lives — the gas in our caokstove

Today we use about 256 trillion cubic feet of natural cas ner year but the known reserves in this country are placed at 35 trillion cubic feet and some estimates place it twice as high-The heating value of this gas is equal to that of ipel oil. The hydrocarbons found in natural gas are methane, ethane, propune, butanes, which are all cases, and pentones, hexanes, beptanes, octanes, and so on which are houses that can be used as easoline. In fact, European countries are using methane outle extensively as a pasoline substirute and it is estimated that over 100,000 autos are now being run on compressed gas thus saving about 2,000,000 barrels of pasoline to carry Hitler's army. The old rasoline filling stations now disneese the compressed out which is kept under a pressure of \$000 pounds per square inch. In order to maintain this tremendous pressure, each con-

taker most be made from hich grade steel.

Haly has many natural gas wells to supply her
with mechane gas while Germany has been able
to produce the gas from the products of secure
fermentation. So nationatory have been the resalts that over 25,000 bases, tracks, and sationary engines in this country use compressed
measure and button.

proposes and tourant.

Proposes also is very useful for it has a high ortane value and can thus be used to run affect plane regimes when they are being tested this seving precious 100 octane gas. It can also be used to the propose the quality of lubercather of by action as the savered used to eliminate postation as an example of the proposed to the proposed of the proposed to the

By sometising the butane found in notural pas, isobutane is produced which is an important substance in the production of avaiting guardine. Hexans and begane are not valuable as motion feel but they can be converted into became and telume which are very important in producing explosives. Benzues can be further treated to

produce skyrane which is mixed under proper conditions in the ratio of one part styrace to three parts britabrine when proteade as present as a catalyst to feem the symbiler trable. Braze Sc. as a catalyst to feem the symbiler trable Braze Sc. which is used in the production of seeperan sucher symbirer trables, and in the production of spika. In the production of lords notional and symbiler suffece affects, another natural gas speciates, as absorbed y executal stone and production of the production of the second trable shows the second second second trables and the second second second trables are second seco

Natural gas can also be cracked to form hydrogen which can be combined with altrogen to form synthetic ammedia. Assumonds is in turn made to combine with mitric acid to form assumonium nitrate, used in making explosives. Hydrogen suifide is also present in many natural gases and this can be converted into militaric acid which

and that can be conserved into music sees want can be conserved in the con

even ethylene.

Ethylene gas is also used as an agent to hasten
the growing of various plants and to ripen fruit.
Propylene also has been found to be effective in
shortening the time taken to raise potatous, toma-

toes, grapufruit, and coanges.

The plastic industry has also turned to the products obtained from natural gas to product their product with great secses. There are also other products which are used to produce the fatty acids from which soap is made. In fact, recent experiments have resulted in a process whereby the fatty acids can be combined with sombetic elevations of the process whereby the fatty acids can be combined with sombetic elevations to make food this that are fit for human.

concumption.

There is no telling how many other useful products will result from our research into the great possibilities found in natural gas but you may rest assured that the thermists will do all they can to produce it for war uses and for the peace that will follow.

7

THAT WORLDS MAY LIVE

by NELSON S. BOND

CHAPTER I

Return from Luna

A VOICE roared, "All clear! Lower away!" The great ship rockets flared, forming a solid, cushioning pillar on which the Spica lowered itself to the land cradle on Long Island Spaceport.
"Tub!" muttered Flick Muldoon.

and made a hasty grab for a case of equipment slithering across the deck. Gary Lane snapped, "Careful, Flick!" . . . which was not like Lane. It was not his nature to be brusone. But now his voice, like his manner, was strained and unnatural. His eyes were tense as he glanced at his wrist chronometer. He sighed relievedly as the wallowing motion of the space-cruiser ended in a final, weary, convulsive

Blue uniformed attendants, luggageladen, brushed by the pair of young scientists. Commands clacked with metallic authority from the brazen throats of dock audiophones. Locks wheezed astimatically, and the warm, sweet fragrance of Earth air flooded through a nearby port.

Flick drew a deep, contented breath. "Home again! Oh, boy! Linen



Not only the Solar System was involved in this war, but the entire universe; because of an old legendary secret—the mystery of Gog and Magog!



A wave of howing man awarmed up the wal

suits instead of those damn bulgers . . . sandals instead of lead boots . . . breathable air instead of oxygen . . ."

". . . and," reminded Gary grimly, "a lob of work to be done. Let's get

going."

His precious portfolio securely gripped in a bronzed fist, he strode to the gangway, stood there blinking momentarily in the pleasant sunlight of Earth. Then a warm hand was on his shoulder, and a friendly voice greeted him. The voice of his superior, Dr. Wade Bryant,

"Welcome home, Gary! Have a good trip? Got lots of good shots, I hope--?"

"I got," said Gary, "plenty! Dr. Bryant, we must go to the Observatory at once. If I'm not greatly mistaken, our expedition discovered something which will tear to bits every previous cosmological theory known to science. Wait till-" He stopped abruptly, silenced by the unexpected presence of a white-haired, cherubic little stranger beside his senior. "I--er--I don't believe I've had the pleasure -- ?"

"No." chuckled Bryant. "But we'll soon remedy that. Professor Anjers, permit me to introduce my brilliant and indispensable young aide, Dr. Gary Lane. Gary, you've heard of Dr. An-

iers, of course?" "Of course," replied Gary respect-

fully. "How do you do, sir?" But his mood had changed. His eagerness was gone: he seemed almost to wish to avoid further discussion. Bryant sensed this. He looked puzzled.

"Well, Gary? Go on. You were saving-?"

"Later," said Gary briefly. He stared absently over the older man's shoulder. "Your car bere?"

Flick Muldoon snorted, "Car? We need a truck! Hey, Doc-look at me! The human derrick. Gary's so doggone busy guarding that briefcase he won't give me a hand with- His eyes rolled in mock horror of the pyramid of equipment heaped about him. Dr. Bryant laughed. "You'll sur-

vive, Flick, I fear. Yes, the car's right over here. If you're ready now-" He led the way. They had moved but a few paces from the cradles when someone stepped beside Gary, murmured a polite, "Shall I take your portfolio, Dr. Lane?", and started to relieve young

Lane of it Gary started violently, jerked his hand loose, "Let go, damn you!" he blazed . . . then his eves widened, and a flush surged unward to copper his already tanned cheeks. "Oh, I . . . I beg your pardon, miss! I had no idea . . .

I mean . . . I . . . " FOR he was staring squarely into the most hurt, most baffled, vet withal most beautiful mist-blue eves he had ever seen. And the eves were but one facet of this girl's gemlike perfec-

tion. She was incredible, as all dreams sprung to life are incredible. For surely such smooth-gleaming copper hair, such lips and teeth and-well, everything about her!--could exist nowhere other than in a dream. But if she were a vision she was not

his alone. For Dr. Bryant spoke apologetically. "Gary, this is Miss Powell, a new addition to our staff. She's to be your personal aide. Nora . . . Dr. Lane . . .

"I'm sure," said the girl icily, "it will be a great pleasure to work with Dr. Lane." She turned to Muldoon. "If I can help you with your instruments --?" Flick stared at her, goggle-eyed.

"H-h-help, sugar! You just stand there and look at me; that's help enough?

For you I could lift mountains!" He proceeded to prove it, stumbling forward under a pack mule load.

N Dr Bryant's office at the Observatory, the gray-haired chief technician turned once more to his young

"And now, Gary, I think you have kept us in suspense long enough. I am bursting with curiosity, and I am sure Dr. Aniers must be, too. He stratoed all the way from Eurasia to hear your report on our first Luna Transit Expedition. Tell us the great surprise you hinted at."

Gary hesitated, eyeing the foreigner

uncertainly. "I-I'm not quite sure, sir-" "Perhaps," suggested Dr. Anjers,

"there is something the young man would prefer to tell you in private?" Dr. Bryant shook his head im-

natiently.

Gary . . . we aren't diplomats, that we should keep secrets from one another. We are all brother scientists. The Foundation has asked Doctor Aniers to help tabulate the results of your findings. He is an outstanding authority on cosmic radiation-"

"I know." said Gary. "Sorry, Doctor. Afraid I'm a bit littery. No offense meant."

The cherubic Eurasian nodded. He spoke with a hint of an accent. "And none taken, my boy. And now--?"

Gary glanced around the room swiftly. To be frank, he himself could not explain his secretive impulse. He knew he bore a vital message, one so important that it must never lightly be revealed, but in this snug group all were friends and allies. And he could

not face the dread facts alone. He drew a deep breath, groped in his portfolio, and drew forth a packet of

photographic prints.

"As you all know, he said, "our expedition went to Luna to take pictures of the recent Venusian transit * It is

unnecessary to point out to you the desirability of the moon as an observational site. Its lack of atmosphere, cloudless skies, absence of dust particles offer ideal conditions for astro-

nomical photography

"We had hoped, on this expedition, to finally solve the mystery of the Sun's corona. Sir Arnold Gregg came near a solution when, in 2016, he determined identity between the solar corona and Earth's Heaviside laver. But his deduction needed verification-"

"And--" Dr. Anjers leaned forward intently-"were you successful? You

learned he was right?" Gary's voice deepened, assuming a tonal quality akin to awe. "I don't know. I have never studied the photographs to see. For my first glimpse of

"Of course not, Dr. Anjers. Come, the developed films revealed something else. Something so great, so completely illogicial yet so tremendously important that-" He paused. "But, wait! I'm going too fast. Before I continue I should

tell you that we attached to our telelens a cinematic spectroscope, the better to ascertain what change of elements was taking place within the corona. "By this spectroscope may be determined the elements of sighted ob-

iects, also-" "-their speed," agreed Dr. Bryant, "in relation to Earth, But I don't see..."

"You will!" promised the young man tensely. "At the moment of transit, when our cameras were focussed di-

*Periodically the planet Venus passes so exactly between our Earth and the sun that the planet is outlined against the sun's disc and may be seen crossing it slowly as a small, black dot. These events, known as trausits, are quite infrequent, occorring in duce of eight years, separated by longer intervals alternating between 105 and

Transits of Venus occurred in 1874 and 1882, in 2004 and 2012 A.D. That observed by Dr. Gary Lone and Flick Muldoon was apparently the transit of June 11, 2247 A.D .- Ed.

12

phenomenon which might not happen again for untold ages. A comet from the far depths of extra-galactic space moved within the vision of our lenses. We got a complete photographic and spectroscopic record of it!"

BLANK stares met his eager pronouncement. Dr. Boris Aniers looked curious. Bryant stroked his iaw, waiting, Nora Powell laughed.

her laughter a musical shard of scorn. "How terribly interesting, Dr. Lane! I'm afraid vou didn't film a very amusing stereop, though. A film without a plot or a hero-"

Gary glared at her frately.

"Uninteresting, eh?" he growled. "A plotless story? Very well - see for yourself! Here!"

And he tossed on the desk before his confrères a set of prints. Bryant, Anjers and the girl moved forward to look at them. Gary and Flick glanced at one another, wondering if their associates would read into the pictures that which they had seen and, seeing, scarcely dared believe.

Then the small visiting scientist raised his head. He said, "This is a very interesting series of exposures, my young friend. But what a shame your camera

moved!"

Gary laughed triumphantly. "That's just it, Doctor! The camera did not move an inch! The 'motion'

in that comet is the very thing I've been talking about!" He bent over the pictures, jabbing an

excited finger at a faint white speck in the upper corner. "Here is the story caught by Mul-

doon's camera. When this first picture was taken, the comet was far out in extra-galactic space. It had not yet hurled itself into the galaxy of which

our solar system is a part. Its position on the two subsequent photographs enable us to determine, accurately and perfectly, the comet's spatial trajectory, "But look at the fourth photograph!

What do you see there?" Dr. Bryant said bewilderedly, "Why, that's odd! The comet seems to have departed from its original trajectory;

it is bent at almost a 45° angle from its former line of flight. That must be where the camera moved," "I tell you again," swore Gary, "that camera did not move! The ac-

tion you see depicted on those prints is but one of two things: either the motion of the comet, itself, or-" He breathed deeply, then plunged-"or the effect worked upon the comet's lightrays by its presence in our galaxy!"

R. ANJERS glanced at him with swift concern. "What is that? Our galaxy! I am afraid you have been overworking, my young friend-"

"Just a moment, Doctor! I have further proof." The younger man's hands dug into his portfolio, "Dr. Bryant, let me ask you a question. If For a long moment there was silence. you were asked to declare the most baifling of all astronomical puzzles, what would you select?"

"Why-why, I suppose the 'red shift', Gary," "Exactly! From the early Nine-

teenth Century to this day, one riddle which has amazed and confounded scientists is the apparent movement of our universe. According to all evidence, our universe is composed of a multitude of galaxies-each of which is running away from all others at unbelievable speed.

"This we know because of the 'red shift'-which one might call the 'Donpler effect applied to light, rather than to sound. When one star, comet or galaxy approaches another, pressing its light waves upon its neighbor, the cosmic body's light waves are shortened. They shift toward the violet side of the spectrum.

"Similarly, a receding luminary pulls

its waves-and the pitch of its light is indicated by a 'red shift.' "Observation has taught us the tragic

falsehood that everything in the universe is running away from all else. We have learned to believe in an 'exnanding universe'.

"But-" Once again Gary placed his finger upon the photographs -"study these margins! These fine lines are the spectrographs of the comet you have just seen. Do they agree with our established theories?"

Dr. Bryant stared.

"But this is incredible, Gary! If the comet in your pictures were nearing our galaxy-as it undoubtedly was -it should at all times exhibit a violet shift. But, instead, it shows here a red shift up to the moment of its departure

a violet shift!" And he looked at Lane, wide-eved and wondering. Dr. Anjers also studied

the younger scientist with respect. Asked the Eurasian, "And the conclusion you draw, my young friend?"

"There is." said Gary seriously, "but one conclusion possible. Science has erred for almost three centuries. Our universe is not expanding. All other galaxies are not racing headlong from our own The Greater Universe is steadfast and secure. It is only our little solar galaxy which moves. And we—are contracting!"

CHAPTER II

The Deadly Radiation

NORA POWELL was frankly out of her depth. It showed in her

eyes, and in the petulant protrusion of her lower lip. She asked, cool gaze studying her new superior, "Would you be kind enough to explain that more

fully, Dr. Lane?"

Gary needed no urging. It was this theory which was responsible for his unusual curtness, for his irate explosion at the rocketdrome, for the preoccupation that had marked his return flight from Luna to Earth.

He wanted most desperately to convince his superior, Dr. Bryant, and all his other associates, that this startling discovery was not lightly to be dismissad Furthermore—and it surprised Garv

Lane to find the desire within him-he wanted to prove to Nora Powell that he was not, in truth, the ogre she now believed him. That there had been an excuse for his rudeness.

So he spoke, setting forth the arguments thought out during the flight from Earth's satellite. "You are all familiar," he said, "with

from its normal course-and thereafter the theory of the 'expanding' or 'bubble' universe.

> "We approach an understanding of this by thinking of our existence-our universe of three spatial dimensions with one temporal extension-as a sphere which is all surface. "Not merely a hollow sphere, you

understand. Everything - including empty space, solid matter and energy, is on the surface of this hypersphere. Thus our galaxy constitutes one point imbedded in the surface of the sphere . . . the nearest star is another . . . the farthest still another . . . and so on with each of a billion galaxies.

"It bas been suggested that an undefined 'something' is 'blowing up' this bubble, and that as expansion increases, the degree of separation between galaxies widens so that they appear to be running away from each other. The big objection to this theory has been the insurmountable question—if this hypersphere is expanding, into what, since it contains all of Space and Time in itself, does it expand?

Dr. Anjers interrupted somewhat caustically.

"You reject this theory. I gother?"

"You reject this theory, I gather?"
("Completely," declared Gary boldly,
"and definitely! It has not, nor will
it ever, solve the paradoxes we observe
My belief is that though the Greater
Universe may be a closed and finite
hypersphere, it is not expanding, but
static. And it lends itself to real and
constant measurement."

Nora Powell said, "But, Dr. Lane the principles of relativity! The value of h, and the Lorenz contraction—"

"Are all taken care of," insisted organ," if you will accept my new major premise. He pondered, briefly, how but to state his idea. Then: "Ict us suppose," he sald, "you are standing in the center of a floor in a large room. The walls of this room, activated by some machine, are moving away from you. If you could measure this motion system of the properties of the prope

Dr. Bryant nodded. "Yes, Gary. That is, in effect, the relationship of our galaxy to the Greater Universe as now conceived."

"Quite. But—" said Gary—"suppose that you stood motionless in that same room, and some strange force acted on you to shrink you! Then what would you see?"

The girl's eyes widened. She cried, "A—a universe running away from you!"

"And your spectroscopic analysis—?"
"Would show the red shift!" Nora

whirled to the two older men. "Dr. Bryant . . . Dr. Anjers . . . be's right! Now I see what the pictures meant! The comet, entering our contracting galaxy, changed its course sharply—"

THE foreign scientist's eyes clouded with impatrice behind their heavy lids. He smiled commiscentistly: "A very interesting conjecture, my young friend. But it is foolhardy to reason sus filings evidence. Vour camera, despite your belief, may have shaken ... your spectroscope may have been out of adjustment ... any one of a thousand things." A chubby band dipped swiftly into Gary's briefcase, driven for the film of film. driven for the film of th

"Is this the roll on which—"
"Dear' do that?" Gary literally
screamed the words, leaping forward
barely in time to prevent the older
scientist from opening the container,
andely be swept the lin from Dr. Anjers' grasp, swiftly inspected the thin
statistical binned that it was insent and
satisfied binned that it was insent and
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The small man nodded understandingly. "The fault is mine, Dr. Lane. Forgive me."

Dr. Bryant, too engrossed in his own thoughts to see the byplay, now raised his head thoughtfully. "Nevertheless, Gary, Miss, Powell

raised an important point. What about our known and proven celestial mechanics?"

"My theoty," said Gary firmly,
"makes them even more valid. They
trath is not reversed—only their meaning. In other words, the principles of
the Lorenz equation still hold true, but
we must learn to interpret if from a
new angle. It is not the yardstick
which moves; it is the observers! We
of this dwindling ealany which alone
of this dwindling ealany which alone

in all the vastness of the Greater Universe, is becoming ever smaller!"

"But—but why, Gary? Why?"
"That," confessed Lane, "I do not
know. But it is a problem we must

solve. And quickly. Or—"
"Or—?" prompted Nora Powell as

he hesitated.

"Oc." concluded Gary grimly— "chibrion! Unless I ared serious for the man in my first computations, there is a limit to the amount of shrinkage matter can show that the shrinkage matter can obtain a shrinkage matter of the shrinkage matter of the shrinkage matter of the shrinkage for the shrinkag

FOR the second time within minutes. silence followed one of Gary Lane's pronouncements. But this was no moment of dubiety, Something of his deadly earnestness had communicated itself to his listeners: their voices were muted as if with awe at the magnitude of his warning. Muldoon already knew, of course, and already believed. Credence shone in the eyes of Nora Powell, Dr. Aniers' broad, fair brow was drawn: the cherubic mask of his features was marred with white lines of concentration. Dr. Bryant coughed. twisting long, capable fingers into steeples of thought.

It was the foreign scientist who broke the silence. Quietly. Carefully. In a voice which might have been gently chiding, had its accent not been thickened by a note of near-alarm.

"Aren't you," he ventured softly, "aren't you being just a little bit melodramatic, Dr. Lane? After all, this is only a hypothesis. A very new and if you will forgive me—most implausible conjecture-"

"New," agreed Gary almost harshly.
"but not implausible, Doctor. We
know, don't we, Flick?" The camera
expert nodded, "We know, and we
have further proof. Those rolls of
film offer half of it; simple mathematics
supplies the rest. Flick, suppose you
ext to work on those exposures right

away. We'll show them..."
"O.Q., Gary," said Muldoon. "I'll
get at it immediately. 'Scuse me.

folks!"

Dr. Anjers said, "Please, no! Don't do this just to convince me, gentlemen. I did not mean to imply doubt. I am skeptical, yes; what man of science would not be? But there is no hurre---"

Gary grinned at him mirthlessly. "That's where you're wrong, Doctor.

There is a need for haste. Every day is precious; perhaps every hour, even fundate. We're not doing this merely to dispel your doubts. We're doing it because it has to be done, and as swiftly as humanly possible. The sooner manhind realizes its peril, the sooner we can take measures to do something. How long will it take you, Elick?"

"At least three hours. Maybe four."
"All right. Get going. Meanwhile,
if you'll perm time, Dr. Bryant, I'd like
to duck into my office. There must be
a lot of accumulated correspondence
to run through. Miss Powell, if you'll
be kind enough to come with me—2"
"Yes. Dr. Lane."

Anjers said, "Office, yes. I have not been near my own desk all morning. Perhaps I, too, should spend a little time with my papers. So, gentlemen—"

y, But Dr. Bryant caught his arm.

"Oh, no you don't, my friend! Lane
is and Muldoon need a few hours privacy,
but I am much too excited to let everyi- one get away from me. Let's go to my

rooms. I must discuss this matter with someone."
"That's it, then," nodded Gary.

"That's it, then," nodded Gary.
"We'll meet in the projection room at—
let's see—five p.m. That's O.Q. with
everyone? So long, then. Flick, careful with those shots!"

Muldoon glared at him aggrievedly.
"You're telling me?" he retorted.
"I isten palato me thanks from held

"Listen, pal—to me they're fresh laid eggs, and I'm the mama hen." Thus the meeting disbanded.

AT FOUR-THIRTY, Gary Lane spoke a last, "yours truly" into his stenoreel, snapped the switch which sent the machine into operation as a transcriber, rose and yawned vigorously.

"That," he said, "is that! Thank goodness. I don't know how I would have ever finished up without your

help, Miss Powell."

Nora Powell said, "I'm glad I was of some assistance, Dr. Lane."

"Some assistance?" grinned Gary.
"You were the whole works. I wouldn't have known how to answer half those letters if you hadn't been here to advise mc. Say, by the way—" He glanced at her quizzically—"Am I forgiven yet? I mean about that business down at the rocketdrome;

Nora Powell met his gaze briefly, flushed and turned away. "I—I had

forgotten all about it, Doctor," she said.
"Now, that," approved Gary, "is
something to really be thankful for
Well, it's almost time for our appointment. Let's go down and see how

Flick's making out."

Thus it was that Gary Lane and the girl were a full half hour earlier in reaching the projection room than had been agreed. On such small hinges is the gateway of Fortune hung. For had they been ten minutes, perhaps a single moment later, the great adventure

th which was to befall them might have ended ere it began. Laughing Flick y. Muldoon might never have laughed again, and the preclous evidence which the he and Gary had brought back from e-Luna might never have been viewed by understanding eyes. y. For when young Dr. Lane pushed

open the projection room door, it was to peer into a chamber not brilliantly alight, as he had expected, but one Styglau-draped in darkness. Even so, she he was not at first alarmed. Filck's prints must surely be ready by now, but it was quite possible the cameraman was testing his equipment. Gary called cheerfully, "Hey, Filck! Why the blackout? O.D. to come in—Saylvle

What's wrong?"

Because his only answer was a deep, choking groan. And even as the girl behind him mouthed an incoherent cry

of warning, Gary got the Illumination he had asked for—but in an unwanted way. The darkness was suddenly, fiercely stabbed with a livid flare, an undulating streamer of light from the opposite end of the room. A crackling, hissing ochre finger of light which seemed to burn with an inward malevolence of its or

And where this dirty glare struck matter, walls and drapes, woodwork and plastic, metal instruments and decorative vines, all—with a dreadful soft of impotent homogeneity—burst into sudden and spontaneous flame! By the light of the burning furniture, Gary glimpaed a dim, uncertain figure huddled in the doorway opposite—and it was from the hands of this unknown argonist learned the living flame!

GARY LANE could claim no heroism for what he did; his actions were too impulsive, too instinctive, to be considered real bravery. It never occurred to him that his enemy was armed

where he was not, nor that the lightstreamer devouring all else in the room could just as easily strip his flesh from his hones like tinfoil over a candleflame. All he knew was that somewhere in this room, Flick Muldoon lay hurt-perhaps dead!-and that documents on which depended the future of all mankind were being imperiled by a

mysterious assailant. Soundlessly, but with the speed of a striking panther, he hurled himself across the room. In the unreal tawnyblack his body could have been, at best, but a dimly glimpsed bulk. The lethal flame did not turn in his direc-

tion, scorching him instantly out of existence. And then-And then his shoulders met sturdy

flesh with a solid impact: the stranger grunted meatily and staggered backward. Gary's hands groped, clawing, for the flame weapon . . . felt his fingers burn on superheated metal . . .

Then the enemy regained his feet. Gary sensed, a rather than saw, the arm uplifting as many voices raised in sudden clamor, and the sound of running footsteps echoed from the corridor he had quitted. He was aware of Nora Powell's cry, "Dr. Lane - look out!

Oh, Gary-I" Then the spinning world descended with brutal force upon his temple, the

whirling galaxies of fire, and he sank senseless to the floor! "-BETTER now," said a voice from

far, far away, "I think he can hear me. Gary, my boy! Are you all right?" Gary lifted his head and groaned;

opened his eyes to find himself looking up into the kindly face of Dr. Bryant. Besides the old astronomer. her mist-blue eyes wide with fear and

something else Gary Lane was too dazed to decipher, stood Nora Powell, while beside her, cherubic cheeks gray with inarticulate outrage, was the small foreign physicist.

Recollection flooded back on Gary; swiveling his head he discovered that the flames which threatened the room had been extinguished. But how

about-?

"Flick?" he muttered, struggling to rise "Flick! Is he-?" "O.O., chum." growled Flick Mul-

doon, coming from behind him, "The firebug busted me, laid me out colder than a Laplander's kiss, but you got a worse smack than I did. I'm O.O."

"And the-the films?" asked Gary fearfully. "Safe," chuckled Muldoon, "as a

pork pie at a Mohammedans' picnic. I went down, yeah-but I went down with 'em clutched to my manly buzzum! Our murderous friend, whoever For the barest fraction of a second! he was, would have needed a canopener to get 'em out of my hands. Me, I've got instincts, I have!"

Gary was on his feet, now, and staring about him. A little unsteadily, true, but gathering strength with every moment. He said, "Then you didn't get a look at him?"

"Who, me? I haven't got eyes in the back of my head, pal!" "How about you, No-Miss Powell?"

gloom split asunder into a myriad Gary caught himself just in time, reddening as he did so. Though his mind was intent on the problem now confronting them, some hidden portion found time to be astorished that his tongue should so trick him.

"I saw him no better than you did. Perhaps not even as well. When you charged him, I ran into the corridor

and screamed for help." "And a good thing, too," appended Dr. Bryant, "The whole Observatory might have gone up in flames had help not come immediately. Gary, that weapon-whatever it was-is the most destructive force ever unleashed by man! It burns right through anything. Wood, metal, plastic-"

"I can see that," scowled Gary. He bit his lip, an unwelcome suspicion forcing itself into his mind as he stared at the other member of their little party. "What puzzles me is-where did he come from? The arsonist, I mean.

How many people are in this Observatory beside ourselves?" "Why, scores, Gary. The laboratory

men and the observers, upstairs, the students below-it was they who helped us fight the fire, you know."

"Yes. But-" Gary turned suddenly to Dr. Anjers, "Doctor-where were you when this fire was started?"

Aniers hlinked at me mildly, "Me, my friend? Why, with Dr. Bryant in his study, of course. But, why? Surely you don't think I-?"

groaned Gary. "While I didn't see the intruder very well, as nearly as I could judge he was just about your height and build. Dr. Bryant, you're positive Dr. Anjers was with you?"

"Of course, Gary,"

"Every minute? Neither of you left the study?" "Not for a second. We were together every moment until we heard

Miss Powell's cry; then we hurried here together. Really, Gary-" "Yes, I know," conceded Gary rue-

fully. "I'm sorry. But the man did look a little like Dr. Aniers, and-"

THE small scientist nodded sympathetically. "Say no more about it. Doctor. You have had ample reason to be apprehensive-and to question. Judging from what I see here, you narrowly escaped a horrible death. Our foe's weapon is,

I cannot understand how anything can create spontaneous combustion in such uninflammable substances as metal and plaster-" "No?" grunted Gary. "Well, I can!

Look here!" He stepped to the wall upon which the ray had played most fiercely, bent

and rose, sifting through his fingers a palm-full of tiny granules. "Here's your answer. And it ties in

exactly with what we were talking about earlier this afternoon. Conden-

sation of matter! "See those granules? They are all

that remain of a space five feet wide by six feet high! Their matter has been condensed by that hellish ray. The liberation of their excess bulk in the form of pure energy was what caused them to hurst into flame. There's your answer, and - Good

Lord!" "I don't know what to think." He stopped, stricken by the thought which had leaped into his hrain. A thought at once so terrible and incredihle that he could scarce believe it. But it must be true! It was the only way this phantasmagoria made any kind of sense.

"Blind! I've been blind! Now I see it all!"

"What, Garv?" demanded Flick. "What do you see?"

"This plaster wall-contracted into a handful of pebbles," said Gary bleakly. "Our galaxy-contracting to a grim and certain death! They are both part of one and the same plot A plot by someone - or something! - to destroy Mankind! It is not simply a blind, unreasoning force which is speed-

ing the destruction of our solar system. It is a deliberate doom to which we are being driven. The weapon used here this afternoon is a miniature replica of that which-Flick, what did

the arsonist's weapon look like? Did you see it?"

Flick shook his head.

"Sorry, Gary, I drew a blank, I

don't remember a thing." But Nora Powell who had stirred to an instrument panel near the crumbled wall, gasped suddenly. "I didn't see the weapon either, Gary," she cried.

"But here is evidence of what it did. Look at this Geiger counter. It has gone completely mad. It has registered more than a thousand direct hits within

the past half hour!" "What?" exclaimed Dr. Bryant, "A

thousand direct hits! That's impossible! Geiger counters register only the impact of cosmic rays. And the periodicity of these rays is as stead-

fast and invariable as-" But Gary Lane silenced him with a

great cry. "Now I know I'm right! The Geiger counter proves it! The weapon used by our enemies shoots-cosmic radiation !"

CHAPTER III "That Worlds May Live"

CILENCE, like the brooding hush of impending doom, fell over the chamber as the significance of his words drove home. For a breathless moment all speech seemed to falter in abeyance, then every voice raised as one.

"Cosmic rays!" gasped Dr. Bryant. "A weapon which shoots gamma radiation?" echoed the cherubic Eura-

sian. Dr. Aniers. "Fantastic!" Muldoon and the girl said as a single person, "Gary, you can't really be-

lieve-" "I must believe," corrected Gary,

"what my eyes tell me. There is only one conceivable explanation. As our chief here pointed out, the periodicity

of gamma ray bombardment is one of the few invariables known to Man. Its constancy matches the monotonous regularity with which uranium transmutes to lead "Scientists have traveled all over the

world . . . east, west, north, south . . but in every latitude and clime their



Earth receded into an omitous distance

Geiger counters measure the same tempo of cosmic ray bombardment. They have delved into the deepest mine-pits miles below ground, descended in bathyspheres to the ocean's floor, and detected no change. They have climbed the highest mountains, traversed space to our neighboring planets... vet everwhere the rate of

bombardment remains the same.

"But here, here in this tiny room where, for an instant, a Geiger counters was bathed in the backwash of a strange, new, all-devouring flame, that was transpe, new, all-devouring flame, that of a thousand direct hits! The conclusion is obvious. That radiation was—must have been—a concentrated discharge of cosmic rays."

Dr. Bryant passed a hand through

his white hair.

"What you say is true, Gary. And it is certainly logical. Still—"

"It is not so much the logic of our young friend's deductions I question," interrupted the other older scientist, "as the fantastic corollaries which necessarily follow his premise. To admit his rightness is to concede that somewhere, someone, for some unfathomable reason, designs the deliberate de-

struction—"
"Of Earth!" said Nora Powell. "Not
only of Earth, but of all the planets
which circle our Sun. For as Gary has
said, all these are bombarded, too, by

cosmic rays.

"Gary, there must be some mistake.

There must be some freak coincidence—"

LANE'S eyes narrowed. "That's just what it cannot be. The coincidence is too striking. Consider. For thousands of years men lived in blissful ignorance of the fact that they and their world were daily being bombarded by rays which science now has reason

to believe are lethal.* During the past few hundred years men have been aware of this radiation, but unable to do anything about it. They can neither analyze it, duplicate it in their laboratories, nor—indeed—determine its exact nature.

"Stut-" And his voice tightened"but we days ago, for the first time, a
clue was found as to the possible nature of these rays; pictures were taken
which may pave the way toward an
understanding of this ancient mystery.
And then what happened? Was it
sheer coincidence that almost timmediately Flick Muldoon, who hasn't an
earny in the world, should be murderown balliwick? And that an attempt
should be made to destrow this incrin-

inating evidence?

"No! That coincidence is too great for me to swallow. It only strengthens my belief that it is not simply

," blind nature which is responsible for it, the doom to which our galaxy is being driven."

Muldoon was an easy-going man, In the tightest spots his carefree nature was wont to assert itself in gibe and cheerful banter. But now his laughter-crinkled eyes were wide with awa and wonderment. He made a vague, sweering cesture.

"You mean, Gary, that out . . . there . . . something or someone—?"
Gary nodded. "Yes. That is what
I am forced to believe. That There-

*Sir James Jeans' view of the cossic rays is that they are causing the material universe to to continuously describe into adultous wiverse to of the variable evidence, the writes, "seems to of the variable evidence," the writes, "seems to insignificant exceptions, forever in the same direction—forever sold matter melts into insultanlar indiation, forever the tangleth change into the interaction—the control of the control to the mirrors. I have one of the view of the the mirrors. I have one of the view of the control of the properties of the control of the control of the control of the properties of the control of the control of the control of the second of the control of the control of the control of the properties of the control of the control of the control of the second of the control of the control of the control of the second of the control of the control of the control of the second of the control of the control of the control of the control of the second of the control of the control of the control of the control of the second of the control of the control of the control of the control of the second of the control of the control of the control of the second of the control of the control of the control of the second of the control of the control of the control of the second of the control of the control of the control of the second of the control of the control of the control of the second of the control of the second of the control of the co

Icana: The Mysterious Universe.

whoever They are, and wherever They may exist-are making a deliberate effort to destroy us."

"But," interpolated the ever-cautious Dr. Anjers, "you cannot be sure of these things, my young friend. You cannot prove them."

"Not now, no. But by the gods, I'm going to try1"

mean?"

"Going to-!" Dr. Bryant looked at his young assistant, startled, "Going to try. Gary? What do you

Lane snoke slowly, putting into words for the first time the idea which had been growing within him ever since he and Muldoon had, upon Luna, chanced upon their amazing discovery.

"I mean I'm going out there, as Flick put it, in search of Them and of that weapon which is slowly but surely bringing death to our civilization. I am going to leave Earth and this galaxy and hunt in the dark depths of the Beyond for the reason conspiring against us."

"Oh, but now wait a minute, Gary," said his friend and constant companion, "I'm your buddy. I'll string along with you on almost anything. But this is going a little too far. Talking of leaving the galaxy, Good Lord, man, you must be out of your mind! Oh have you forgotten how to count? The fastest spaceship ever built travels at a rate of only about 7,000 miles per minute. And the nearest star, Proxima Centauri, is about four light-years away. At that rate, all that would be left of you by the time you got there would be a little heap of dried-up dust." Lane smiled thinly. "Don't worry about that. We'll be alive when we get

there." "What! We! Where do you get the

community spirit?" "We," said Gary, "because you're going, too, Flick, I'll need you, And

any of the others who want to come along. I think I can promise you the greatest adventure ever undertaken by human beings." DR. BRYANT said, "Gary, what

are you talking about? Muldoon is absolutely right. It would take centuries to reach the nearest star. How, then do you expect-?"

"Centuries," acknowledged Gary, "if the ship in which we traveled had only the speed Flick mentioned. But you know as well as I that on another planet of this system dwells a race which knows the secret of achieving speed beyond that of the limiting velocity of light."

"You mean." asked Nora Powell. "the Iovians?"

"That's right,"

"But they won't tell. It's their most cherished military secret. And with the entire solar system in the state of nervous unrest it has been in for vears-"

"They must tell. It is to their benefit as well as ours. We will go to them and explain the enormity of the disaster which threatens our solar system. They are not creatures quite like ourselves, true; but they are intelligent beings. And they desire extinction no more than we. When they have learned the awful truth, I think they will lend us their secret.15

Professor Anjers laughed mirthlessly. "You have much to learn about the races that people the planets, my young friend, if you think the Jovians will contribute their great secret to save the races with whom even now war threatens-"

"They will not be the only contributors. Each of the major planets will contribute its share to this adventure. Must contribute, for the ultimate good of all.

"From Earth-" Gary ticked the requisites off on his fingers as he spoke -"from Earth's government we must borrow the knowledge of the hypatomic drive which makes space-flight possible. Venus must supply us with neurotrope, their super-efficient fuel, the only type sufficiently condensed to enable us to leave our galaxy. The Martian people must lend us their formula for building impenetrable force-fields about space vehicles, lest a stray comet or a hail of meteoric debris met in the outer darkness bring our flight to sudden ending. And from Jupiter must come the secret of transcendent speed, through which-and only through which-can we hope to reach our goal."

Muldoon whistled softly. "That's a big order, Garv. Four big orders, in fact."

And Dr. Bryant said, "I'm afraid I can only repeat Dr. Aniers' words, Gary. You expect too much of our neighbors in asking them to give you

OF all his companions, only the girl, Nora Powell, offered any word of encouragement. Her eyes were shining with a great purpose, and with a great determination, too. With an almost indiscernible movement she seemed to leave the fellowship of his doubters and arraign herself at Gary's side. Her words were like the warmth of a friendly handclasp as she said:

"But they will give! Because they must! Dr. Lane-Gary-it's a great dream. One which we must see to ful-

fillment." Gary glanced at her, pleased and

gratified. "We?" he repeated.

The girl nodded determinedly, "Yes, we. Because if you'll have me. Gary. I want to join your expedition."

"Well, now," drawled Flick Muldoon, "as far as that goes, I've been beefing a little, yeah. But on purely technical grounds. I didn't sav I was going to pull a sneak on the shindig. Hell I'll try anything once. You can count me in, Gary, lock, stock, and barrel."

Gary said gravely, "Thanks both of

you. And you Dr. Bryant?" The older man smiled thinly, "I won't deceive you, Gary, I confess I still have my doubts as to the

practicality of your ambitions. Nevertheless. I'd be a poor scientist if I were to refuse to lend my small efforts to such a magnificent undertaking. Of course, you may count on me. Boris -" He turned to his Eurasian colleague-"I'm sorry our conversations are to be thus abruptly terminated by what may seem to you a somewhat im-

pulsive decision. But there may be something in Dr. Lane's warning." To the surprise of everyone, the rather easily-annoved Dr. Aniers this time showed no annovance whatsoever. Instead, his bland, cherubic face was nuckered with thought, and when he

spoke it was with firm decision. "No, you are completely right, my friend. Dr. Lane has not convinced me-vet. But if he is right, this is no matter for slow ponderings. We must act at once. And I too, if you will permit, would like to become a member

Gary Lane smiled, ashamed now of his earlier treatment of this staunch little scientist, of the near-accusations he had twice cast upon the little man. He said simply, "I would be proud and glad to have you with us, Dr. Anjers. Of course, we five will not be all. We must have a pilot, an experienced astrogator, and crewmen to handle the

of your party."

ship itself-" "Which brings up," interpolated Flick Muldoon with devastating casualness, "the first important question. Where you going to get this ship, Gary? And how are you going to talk the kingpins of our planet into giving you what you want?"

you want you want?" (Obviously, we must go to Geneva and there present our agument to the members of the World Council. But—" And his eyes took on a shiring akin to that in the eyes of his feminine and farst-spoken commod—"but we cannot fail. What we do not the for curestween about his do not the course when the control of the course was about herefit or profit. A quest we must successfully fulfill—that worlds want level."

And the girl's voice echoed softly,

"That worlds may live . . ."

CHAPTER IV

Fugitives from Earth

"WHAT time is it?" asked Nora

Dr. Bryant looked up from the black-and-white-squared table over which he and his companion were bent, engrossed in one of mankind's most ancient pastimes.

"Er-I beg your pardon, my dear?

What did you say?"
"I asked," repeated Nora, "what time it is?"

"Oh—time? Almost four o'clock."
"Time," growled Flick Muldoon,
from the other end of the balcony, "he
was setting back."

"Gary, you mean?" Dr. Boris Anjers, having placed his opponent destructively en pris, leaned hack in his chalr. "Have patience, my boy. These things take time, you know, and it is a difficult mission upon which our young friend has one."

"It's all right for you and Doc Bry-

ast. You've got a chess game to ocon. cupy your minds. Me, I got little pin,
p, and green meemies running up and
alk down my corpuscles. I'm going to
take a walk. Want to come along,
Nora?"

Nora Powell said, "No, thanks, Flick. I'll wait here for him." Then, as the restless young cameraman stalked from the plazza and the two graybeards returned to their game, she wandered disconsolately to the far end of the halcony, for perhaps the dozenth time in the hour gazed out over the most heartbreaking beauty of the

scene before and below her.

This cyrie from which she looked
was a modest but charming pension in
Geneva, a resist faund for its beautiful
surroundings and deligabilit dickworld.
Antern Ord. for the Pott Salver rose
like a wall, it, in turn, overtopped by
Blac a wall, it, in turn, overtopped by
Blac a wall, it, in turn, overtopped by
Blac The sky was the bright and tunhelfwalls blue of mountain country.
From the valle below echoed the mellow

lilt of a shepherd's yodeling.

Here, after hasty preparation, had
the five comrades-in-adventure estahlished residence until Gary Lane could
convince the World Council, which
arthorad in this traditional?

gathered in this traditionally neutral nation, of the urgency of their demands . . . and receive from this all-supreme body that terrestrial secret which was

vital to the furtherment of their alms.*
Here had they cooled their heels for very nearly a fortnight while Gary

"Out of the bloody conflict of the Americat Rebellion (129-2008 A.D.) was born, at long last, the Terrentrial World Union. National boundaries were behaved nown, restil eliques and projudices were abandoned, and Earth becames use single community quotings a ningle Insequent. The World Council, an electron body varied in Genera, Unit data (soort the Republic of Swatzehand), governed planetary trude, politics and practices—Ball. wormed and forced and argued his way through hordes of underlings to finally reach the ear of those Councillors who alone could grant his request. Such an interview had finally been achieved. and today was the fateful appoint-

Alone, a few short hours ago, Lane had set forth to the Council Hall, laden with Muldoon's photographs, his own and Dr. Bryant's mathematical analyses, and all other documents necessary to prove his claims. Now his companions, placidly or nervously as their individual natures determined. awaited his return.

S to what sort of exhibition she her-A self was making, Nora Powell could not say. If she was not so openly impatient as Flick Muldeon. neither was she complacently attentive like the two older scientists. She was, she thought with sudden whimsy. much like one of those ancient volcanic peaks so gloriously sharp-limned on the horizon before her: surfacely cool, but inwardly and secretly aflame with constrained eruptive fires which might at any moment burst their bonds.

The afternoon was pleasantly cool, but standing there alone on the balcony her cheeks were suddenly warm to the touch as she caught herself wondering what would be Gary Lane's reaction were he to realize how startlingly accurate was this analogy. During these last weeks, their past differences forgotten, she and the young physicist had fallen into a pleasant and easy camaraderie. Formalities had been swept away in the urgency of the moment, and on everything they worked together like lifelong friends.

But that, thought Nora with a thin stirring of rebelliousness, was just the trouble. That which within her had developed toward Gary Lane could not so easily be dismissed with the loose and meaningless term "friendship." It was something else, something deeper, stronger, more tremulously chaotic . . . like the subdued inner strivings of

those pleasantly placid mountains. Did he, she wondered with a strained and baffled curiosity, feel that, too? Or was he always too much the scientist to be just a plain man looking upon her . . . seeing her . . . not as a friend.

but as a woman? The sound of crisp, firm footsteps spelled an end to her thinking. She

whirled to the doorway. "Gary! You're back!"

Then her heart chilled within her at the look on his face. Never had she seen Gary Lane like this. His features were hard as if they had been cast in a mold, then frozen. His lips were whitely set, his eyes twin glittering flints of anger.

"Yes," he said harshly, "I'm back, It's all over. We're done. Finished. Washed up."

Dr. Bryant rose from his chair swiftly. "What do you mean, Gary? The Council didn't-?"

"Oh, didn't they?" Lane's bark was a mirthless shard of laughter, "They turned me down cold. Said our conclusions were erroneous, my theory a fantastic figment of the imagination. The fools! The everlasting damned fools! Don't they realize they're condemning a universe to oblivion?"

Dr. Anjers patted the younger man's shoulder soothingly, his bright che-

rubic face soberly consoling, "I'm sorry, my boy, But I warned you it would be difficult. Men see no

farther than the ends of their noses." "Maybe not," grated Gary, "but they hear . . . oh, God, how they hear! That's what killed our chances Somehow or other they got a rumor of what was in the wind. They had been warned in advance of who I was and what I wanted; when I started explaining, showing my photographs, they just sat back and smirked at me with that 'Yes, yes, we know all about it; isn't it a pity that one so young should be deranged?' look on their

snoma ve derangear look on their smug, complacent faces."
"Heard of it?" cried Nora. "But

how could they have heard of it?"

Lane shook his head doggedly.
"That's what I've been asking myself ever since I left the Council Hall. To the best of my knowledge, not a living soul knows our secret except us five."

"And." reminded Dr. Aniers. "one

other."
"One other?"

"The marauder in the observatory."

L ANE was silent for a moment, Then he nodded. "That's right. I'd almost forgotten. Their ambassador. It's his diabolic hand again. It must be. Lord, if we had only caught him that day. If we only had some idea who he was—"

The door opened again, and Flick Muldoon burst in jubilantly. "Great howling snakes, folks, look who I found wandering around down on the streets like a roaming comet! That dol star-shooting son-of-a-gun himself —Ob, golly, Gary! You're back! What'd they say, pal? Do we get the ship? Is everything set?"

"Not set," corrected Gary. "Settled!" And told him what he had told

the others.

Muldoon's ruddy face fell. "Well, I'll be damned!" he whispered. "And to think Earth's government set them dumb lunks up in power to rule mankind's affairs! What are we going to do now? We can't give up just because..."

"I think," suggested Nora, "the first

thing you'd better do, Flick, is introduce your friend. This must all seem rather mysterious and awkward to him."

"Oh, my golly!" gulped Flick. "I almost forgot. I'm sorry, Hugh. Doc, you remember Hugh Warren, don't

you remember Hugh Warren, don't you?"
"Warren?" Dr. Bryant's gaze turned

querulously toward the tall, fair, smiling young man in the doorway. The newomer was dressed in the respected gold-trimmed blue of the Solar Space Patrol. His even features were tanned to a cinamon hue by long exposure to the raw, umbhélded radiations of the vold. The old scientist's eyes lighted with belated recognition. "Not young Hugh Waren who used to volve Celestial Astrogation at the Observatory?"

The spaceman grinned, stepping forward to wring the older man's hand with phalange-crushing enthusiasm.

"The same, Dr. Bryant," be cluckled. "The enery forgation those courses in Silly Ass. Most fur I've ver had... and I've had plenty since that. Lord—" He made the rounds, ending beside Gary Lane, about whose shoulders he threw an arm in warm, maxucline affection—"Lord, it's good to see you earth-labbers again! You had been assessed to be a supplementation of the little tanged abb, Gary, the of down. But, then, they tell me marriage does that to a yeu."

"Marriage?" echoed Lane blankly.
"Why-why, yes. Isn't this young

lady—?"
"No. This is Miss Powell, my assistant, And the gentleman beside Dr.
Bryant is Dr. Boris Anjers. Dr. An-

jers, Lieutenant Warren."

Dr. Anjers said politely, "It is always a pleasure to meet friends of my friends. But house" Dr. Lorenzale.

friends. But hasn't Dr. Lane made a small mistake? If my poor eyesight does not deceive me, your markings gravely querulous.

are not those of a space lieutenant—" Warren grimed. "That's right. Sprise, folks! The Council up and made me a Captain, on account of me and my boys were lucky enough to salvage a smashed liner out of the log." That's why I'm here in Geneva. Waiting to take command of my new ship, the sweetest, smoothest, little whipper-dipper of a cruiser you ever laid eyes on. Boy, is it ever a honey!

All the latest equipment—"
"Cruiser!" said Lane bitterly.
"They've got lots of cruisers for routine work, but they won't even spare

one old broken down jalopy for—"
Hugb Warren looked puzzled. "For
what? What's the gripe, chum? You
look like you'd just found a bug in a
raspberry."

"It's worse than that," said Gary.

And he told Warren the whole story
briefly, beginning with the lunar expedition and ending with the recital of his
recent interview.

A S LANE spoke, the young spaceman's smile faded slowly, the laughter-born crinkles in the corners of his eyes disappeared. And Nora Powell, watching this transition, realized that beneath the surface vivacity of this newcomer there lay a core of steel, flame-hardened in the crucible of action.

When Gary finished Warren did not speak. Instead, he jammed hamlike hands deep into his trousers pockets, stalked to the far end of the balcony, and there with head lowered, shoulders hunched, his back to the others of the group, stared for long minutes unseeingly out over the distant paneman. At length he turned, his eyes

*The Bog: spaceman's term used to designate the Asteroid Belt between Mars and Jupiter.--

ngs gravely querulous.

"Garv . . . vou're sure of what you've

t. been telling me?"
d "I only wish," said Gary bitterly,

"there were some possibility of error."

"What do you say, Dr. Bryant?"

"There is only one thing to say.

Cary is right; completely right. We have seen the pictures, checked and rechecked our calculations a hundred times. There is no doubt but that the me approaches, and it all too soon, when Earth's sun and its eutrie swarm of tributary planets will exceed the critical dwindling point and flame into sudden oblivion."

"And—and knowing these things, the Council wouldn't give you a ship, Gary?"
"They just laughed at me. Said the

whole theory was ridiculous."
"Lordl" said Captain Hugh Warren,
"What fools we mortals be! Of course,
Gary, I can see their point . . . to a
certain extent. It does sound mad,
your idea of visiting three only halffriendly planets and asking each of
them to open-handedly donate its most
cherished military secret. But it's the
only way . . ."

His hands came from his pockets in a swift, decisive motion.

"Yes, it's the only way. How soon can you be ready to leave?"

"How-soon?"

"There's no time for fiddle-faddle. If we're going to do anything, we've got to do it now before anything leaks, or anyone can get suspicious."

"We?" echoed Dr. Bryant bleakly.
"Of course?" Hugh Warren brushed
the older man's dubiety aside with
brusque and characteristic impatience.
"You don't think I'm going to stand
on the sidelines and let this adventure
romp along without me, do you? And
besides, I'm just what the doctor ordered: the answer to your problem.

You need a ship and a crew, don't you? And a pilot? Well, I've got the first and the second. And I'm the last myself."

NORA POWELL burst forth impetuously, "But—but, Captain Warren, we can't let you do that. You're a military man. You'd be court-martialed on charges of desertion—"

tilated on charges of desertion—""
"If," grunted Warren, "they caught
us. Yes. But I'm not figuring on anybody catching he Liberty. She's the
sweetest little ether-pusher that ever
ame off a cradle. And as for
court-martial—" He shrugged—"we'll
worry about that if and when we get
back. According to Gary, if somehing shri done—and done quick—
there won't be any court-martials to
try traitors.

"And--" He grinned--"I'd rather be a dead felon than a live loyalist."

oe a rose de room can in Twe loyaust. Thus, in a manner far different from that which the comrades had planned was the matter arranged. Swiftly, but a plan the properties of the properties

Amidst the hurly-burly and contusion of this place it was a simple matter for Capatin Hugh Warren to delegate two members of his crew to slip to the larger drome and there, unnoticed in the bediam of blasting explosions, milling throngs, and tearful goodbyes, move the pile of luggage from one drome to the other.

By nightfall the exchange had been completed; the plan was in readiness. There came to the pension a small, gnarled figure bearing a mountainous bundle. This, when unwrapped, proved to be sufficient of the familiar sky blue SSP uniform clothing to disguise every member of the party. The bearer, a man who identified himself as, "'Awkins, sir—'Erby 'Awkins, stooard o' the blinkin' Liberty, that's me, sir!" gravely transmitted Captain Warren's instructions as to entering the SSP rocketdrome.

"Just walk on past the sentry without sayin' nothin', folks," he advised. "I'll give the password for the crew of us. Actin' like you had maybe a drop too many might be a bit of an 'elp, but it don't matter much. The sentries will be expectin' us, and won't think

a thing of it."

"Expecting us?" repeated Nora.

"Five strangers, including a woman?"

'Erby 'Awkins grinned impishly.

"Beggin' your poddon, miss, but when you get them volly-cominus blues

"Beggin' your poddon, miss, but when you get them volly-continus blues surapped about your own pretty self—surapped about your own pretty self—when you was make or female, old or young. And there's no call for them to be suspicious. Cap'n, he give low men all night leave. Cap'n, he give low men all night leave, comits' lack. But he reported to the Captain of the Guards that he was espectifn' five of his crew to report back to beadquarters at eleven o'dock, to beadquarters at eleven o'dock. That's, the low when we'll enter the

Gary said soberly, "We understand, Hawkins. I see Captain Warren bas already told you what we are planning to do."

And Hawkins replied with quiet dis-

nity, "He didn't tell me nawthin', sir; not a blinkin' word. And if I does 'nw y suspicions, well, word matter? Cap'n Warren's our skipper, sir. What he decides is good enough for me and the rest of the crew."

SO AT eleven o'clock that night, as



mountains rose to merge with the thicker black of a clouded moonless sky, five slightly tipsy figures lurched with shambling feet to the sacrosanct portal of the Solar Space Patrol rocketdrome

As Hawkins had promised, they passed the gate unchallenged, the little purser volunteering the password for all of them. And as they left the gate behind, young Dr. Lane breathed a deep sigh of relief. The one hazardous point of their effort now lay behind them. Five hundred yards away lay the ship upon whose flaming jets they soon would thrust voidward on a quest of magnificent daring.

The gate crashed to behind them. and the sentry's amused drawl advised. "All right, lads, bop along back to your ship and sleep it off before your skipper finds out-Wait a minute! What's

the matter there?"

His voice lifted in sharp query, and beside Gary, Nora Powell gasped in swift alarm; her right hand sought and gripped his arm in a clutch of panic fright. For awkwardly, in the darkness, one of their party had slipped and fallen. And as he sprawled on the rough, uneven ground, he cried in a loud and decidedly unsailorlike voice "Ok goodness gracious! How perfectly stubid of me!"

It was the rotund little scientist, Dr. Aniers!

CHAPTER V

En Route to Venus

COLDNESS gripped Lane's heart; his breath caught in his throat. In a moment the sentry's flashlight would dart its questing beam upon their group. Their shoddy disguise could

brook no such probing revelation. He guessed right. A sudden shaft of silver split the darkness dazzlingly, revealing the round, stunned face of Dr. Aniers lifted in worbegone chagrin.

And the sentry cried again, "Say, hold on! What does this mean?"

29

It was no time for considered action. Lane did what must be done . . . and did it swiftly. In a single, swooping motion he whirled raced dove for the sentry's legs. Both men went down in a flurry of tangling limbs. Arms strained to escape Gary's viselike grip that a marksman's hand might find its

weapon

But if strength and armed superiority was the sentry's, the element of surprise favored Gary. Before the patrolman could reach bis weapon, before even his startled wits advised him to lift his voice in a cry of warning. Lane's arm lifted once . . . twice. The spaceman sighed-and slumbered Gary leaped to his feet, lashing a cry

of command out over the now swiftly wakening rocketdrome.

"Take his other arm, there, Hawkins! We'll carry him. There, that's

it! Now, to the ship, folks-quickly! There's not a second to lose!" And with the aid of the little steward he swept Aniers to his feet, half-lifted.

half-bore him to the entrance port of the Liberty, now shining like a white rectangular beacon in the darkness before them. An instant later all five were within the craft. The sixlash closed behind them, and Captain Hugh Warren was rasping swift commands over the audiophone system:

"Lift gravs! Throw all thrusts at five gees immediately! No time to warm hypos, Give her the gun! Hurry!

For God's sake-1"

chambers stirred to power.

The shrill, high whine of straining hypatomic motors coursed through the ship, losing itself in the thunderous rumble of spluttering jets as the fuel

A voice clacked over the audio system, "Course and trajectory, Captain?" "Later!" roared Warren, "Later,

Lift gravs-quickly!" Then a brutal, invisible hand smashed down on Gary Lane's head

and shoulders with crushing force. His knees buckled beneath him and the blood drained from his head as he pitched forward helplessly on his face, caught in the grip of a bruising acceleration. The roar of exploding jets smashed furiously at his eardrums. The ship beneath him seemed to nick itself up, shake itself like a huge, metallic beast, and leap into the shrouded darkness.

Earth, an already dwindling ball of glowing green, lay a multitude of miles beneath and behind them. Their jour-

ney was begun,

WHEN mons of agony later it seemed his laboring lungs could no longer supply his wracked body with precious oxygen, when it seemed but a matter of seconds before his very veins must burst beneath the crushing of that horrid acceleration, there descended upon Gary Lane a brief moment of vertigo. Darkness spun dizzily before his eyes. And when the instant passed, the pressure was gone. He was free to rise again from the hard metal deck around anything that ever punched to which gravitation had skewered him.

It was a measure of his fortitude that of all his companions save only the space-hardened Captain Hugh Warren. Gary should have been the first to regain his feet. Muldoon followed his example seconds later, to be followed slowly by the girl and the cockney steward, then the two older men. It was 'Erby 'Awkins who broke the labored silence.

"Well," he said with shaken satisfaction, "Well, it were touch-and-go for a moment, weren't it? But we

seems to be orl right now. Wot blinkin' cheer, eh, shipmates?"

Nora said with a palpable effort toward regaining a vestige of her usual composure, "Touch-and-go is right! I've lifted grays before, but never so swiftly nor so suddenly. If you ask me, that's no way for a girl to keep her

figure." 'I'm sorry," said little Dr. Anjers contritely. "I am deeply sorry, my

friends. It was all my fault. Had I not stumbled and fallen, inadvertently roused an alarm-" "Forget it." said Flick Muldoon.

"Everybody pulls a pancake once in a while. It's just tough luck that you happened to pull yours at a bad moment. The main thing is, what are we going to do now?"

He looked at Warren questioningly, but Warren's eves were upon Gary.

"That's your cue, Gary. I'm just flying this ship; you're plotting the

course." Lane said soberly, "Well, Venus is our first logical stop, but I don't know -now. The whole Patrol will be out

after us like a pack of hounds." Hugh Warren chuckled grimly, "Let They'll never catch the Liberty. This is the fastest little ship afloat in space. We can run circles

holes in the ether." "Yeah?" said Muldoon interestedly. "What's your speed?"

"On test flights," answered Warren proudly, "about a thousand. But that was straight cruising speed. In an emergency we might be able to make as much as twelve-fifty."

"What! A cruising speed of a thousand miles per second? But - but

that's over ten million miles per day!" "And with Venus in inferior conjunction," said Nora excitedly, "we can be there in two and a half days!"

"Well, not quite. You have to allow a time lag for acceleration and deceleration. But—" Captain Warren grinned happily—"three days should do the trick. Not bad. eb. Garv?"

Gary Lane said dazedly, "Not bad! Mister, when they start giving medals for understatement, you ought to get one as big as the United Nations Victory Tower. Why, the universal record for an Earth-Venus flight is almost a day longer than that."

"Three days," supplied Warren, a "eighteen hours, twenty-three might before the more than the ball minutes. Which same so-called frecord" we're going to bust is ways, to hell-and-gone on this little shutter. Only—" he admitted ruefully—" the admitted ruefully—" the minute more record won't count, seeing as how it's unofficial as hell. Well, Venus, to chart the course and trajectory. Hawkins, show our guests to their quarters. We'll meet later in the lonnee."

And he vanished bridgeward.

CO SET the Liberty forth upon the first leg of its argosy. The next three days sped swiftly. So fraught with activity, indeed, were his waking hours, that Gary Lane found scant time in which to acquaint himself with the Liberty and its personnel. One thing he learned from his space commander friend; that there were, in addition to himself and his companions, fifteen souls aboard the craft. Of these, three were Patrol officers: Hugh Warren himself, his mate, Lieutenant Angus Mac-Donald, and the Chief Engineer, a lean. tacitum man named Schold more were subalterns: Bud Howard the assistant engineer, and Tommy Edwards, the ship's Sparks. The enlisted men included Herby Hawkins, the steward: Tony, potentate of the galley: four able-bodied spacemen; and four blasters of the iet-chamber crew.

we "We're short," Hugh Warren pointed out, "five men. The five as whom you can ealward. The wood of these were spacemen. We can spare them. Another two were blasters. If we can get by without them, too, its though it means longer shifts and barder work for the remaining four.

Est the other one—" He shook his bad—"we're really going to need him. a He was Fred Harkness, my first make. A med snaceman with a keen mind for

handling a ship in an emergency. If we run into any snaags we're going to wish he was along,"
"Then why did you let him go?" asked Gary.
Warren grinned a tight, lopsided grin. "For the same reason I gave the other four leave. Because I knew Pd.

figures and a swift, intuitive ability at

never be able to convince him I was doing the right thing. He was strong on discipline. He would have wanted no part of this escapade."

That was something which had been

That was something which had been troubling Dr. Gary Lane. He said thoughtfully, "And you, Hugh? You're not sorry?"

"That I cast my lot in with yours? Made your cause mine? No." Warren shook his head decidedly. "Decidedly not. I'm sorry I had to, on the surface at least, play traitor to the uniform I wear. But under the circumstances I believe I did the proper thing. This little emblem-" he touched the small gold rocket ninned above his heart-"is inscribed with the motto of the Solar Space Patrol: 'Order out of Chaos.' That is the duty to which we are charged above all others. And though for a time it means flying in the face of orders and conventions, I feel the importance of our task justifies my desertion.

"If-..." his jaw set tightly-..."if we succeed in doing that which you say we must, exoneration will follow swiftly and surely." "And," said Gary softly, "if we do

Warren shrugged, "The question carries its own answer. If we do not. then according to your own calculations, there will be no Hugh Warren to stand trial, nor court to sit in judgment upon his sins."

THUS sped the Liberty through space at a rate of speed attained by no other spaceship before her. Each passing hour found Earth dwindling smaller and dimmer behind them: each hour saw Earth's sister planet looming ever

larger and brighter before. As they flashed sunward, the Sun

grew greater, too. Its radiance, downpouring upon them with devastating beneficence, was like the molten spuming of gaseous gold. Though the polarized quartzite of the ship's viewpane blacked out its brazen light, nothing could stay the increase of its heat. It grew warmer and ever more sultry in the Liberty despite the labors of the ship's air-conditioning system. Flick Muldoon, shirt plastered wetly

to his back, mopped his brow and groaned. "It takes a trip away from home to make you realize what a sweet little old gal Mama Earth is. Boy, I wouldn't live on Venus for all the bubbles in a beauty bath! If it's like this out here in space, what must it be like on the planet itself?"

From his seat at the control studs, Lieutenant Angus MacDonald grinned

companionably.

"Not so bad as you'd think, You see, even though Venus is 25,000,000 miles nearer the sun than Earth, she's protected from the sun's glare by a cloud-layer almost three times as thick as the atmosphere layer of Terra. As a result, the planet has neither a burn-

ing hot summer season nor a frigid winter period but a fairly pleasant and constant temperature all the year 'round."

Dr. Anjers said, "I have been fearing recently that we may find some-

thing else, too, not quite so pleasant," "What's that?" "The Space Patrol," said Anjers

gravely, "waiting for us. We are traveling at the greatest rate of speed ever attained by a spacecraft, true, but the speed of light makes mockery of our efforts. And that is the rate at which a warning message must have winged its way before us. Is it not possible we are running directly into a tran? A Patrol fleet grimly awaiting our arrival?"

Skipper Warren shook his head. "A couple of years ago, yes, undoubtedly. But not now."

"No? Why not?"

"Because," explained Warren gravely, "the Solar Space Patrol is not an interplanetary patrol any longer, Few earthmen realize that, but it's true, The purpose for which it was formed that of policing and providing judicial protection to all the civilized planets. has been overthrown. The militaristic ambitions of each world have heightened so greatly in the last counle of years that now every other planet in the system looks with disfavor upon the SSP, which was an invention of the Earth government.

"One by one, its garrisons have been withdrawn from Venus, Mars, Jupiter, the asteroids, until now the organization which used to proudly boast the maintenance of order throughout the whole system has become nothing more than an armed protective corps for Forth itself !

"IS THAT true?" gasped Nora Powell. "But why should the other planets refuse to cooperate?"

"It's our own fault," confessed Warren glumly, "The Patrol was a good idea, but it wasn't organized properly, Its membership should have been drawn from the likeliest youths of each world. Instead, through selfishness or cunning or greed—I don't know why—Earth undertook the policing of the entire solar system with only the young men of her own world.

"Then again, throughout many decades we have steadfastly refused to aid the other worlds in developing spaceraft. Earth, and Earth alone, knows the secret of the construction of hypatonic motors which make spaceflight possible. It is a secret we guard jeil—outly. That is swyt there exists no Venusian fleet, no Martian fleet, Jovian fleet. Only an Earth fleet which—and fleet. Only an Earth fleet which—and all the other planets fear as an aggressive force.

"Earth, too, has the only merchant fleet. And while it is no doubt true that other planets profit somewhat by the interchange of commerce our merchantmen make possible, it is into Earth's coffers pours the wealth of the universe."

"Why-why, that's true," said Dr. Bryant. "I had never realized it before, but that is undoubtedly responsible for the known disaffection between Earth and the outlying planets. But. Captain Warren, the common people of Earth don't realize this! They, like myself, are too busy with the small details of their private lives to wonder more than casually about such things. It never occurred to me to wonder at the lack of other interplanetary merchantmen. I suppose I always took it for granted that we of Earth were doing our solar neighbors a great favor by regulating interplanetary commerce. Now I can see..."

He paused, his eyebrows knit in thought. Then—"But something must dertainly be done about this situation. What can we do?"

"Right now," replied Warren gravely, "nothing. We have a more important task confronting us. But if and when this other affair is successfully cleared up, something should be finally done to create a new world order truly based on the principle of equal rights

with liberty and justice for all." Muldoon said cautously "But, wait a minute. There's a bug in that reasoning somewhere. You say the other planets haven't learned the secret of the hypatomic motor? Well, ships crash, don't they? And ships can be captured. It seems to me that if any nation really wanted to learn that secret—"

"They could not do so," replied
Warren, "any more than we in this ship
could learn the actual mechanism of
the motor driving us."

at "What? We can't-but why?"

"Because the hypatomic motors which drive us are encased in a steel jacket equipped with a device so regulated that were any attempt made to open it and study its mechanism it would instantly explode, blowing itself and us into oblivion."

And Warren added softly, "I think you begin to understand now, my friends, why every other world fears and distrusts Earth. And why our task of pleading for their cooperation is harder than Gary expected."

CHAPTER VI

"Introducing Larkspur O'Day . . ." IN exactly three days, one hour and

forty-five minutes Solar Constant time, the Liberty dropped to a perfect landing in a cradle on the rocketdrome of Sun City, seat of the Venusian planetary government. As Warren had foretold, their ar-

As Warren and foretout, their arrival was unchallenged by any ship of the SSP fleet. Sole occupants of the rocketdrome's cradles were lumbering freighters and sleek merchantmen emblazoned with the emblem of Earth's

merchant marine, But if their arrival was unchallenged

it was not unexpected. A host of chony-akinned Venusians gathered about their ship instantly. As soon as their party emerged from the lock, a delegation moved forward to greet hem. With but a few words of preamble they were whisked away to the Venusian Council Hall. There, serving as spokesman for the group, Gary Lane launched earmersity upon an ex-

planation of the mission which had brought them hither.

It was a strikingly different group of beings whom Gary now spoke to than those to whom he had addressed his plea on Earth three short days ago. The Venusians were human. Upon his conquest of space, man had discovered —somewhat to his surprise and more than a little to the chagtin of the ethnologists who had predicted otherwise

nologists who had predicted otherwise —that nowhere (in the solar galaxy at least) had risen to planetary supremacy any race of creatures other than

that represented by Homo supiests. But where on Earth of the Twentythird century while, or Caucasian, man was the admostdeed cultural leader of his planet, here on Verna the situacoverlords were dark-skinned men of magnificent figure and intellect. The planet embraced only a minority of the white and yellow-skinned races. And these, when found, were for the most part centuries deeper in bratheries and of the planet.

To the bafflement of science, laboratory research had proven beyond the shadow of a doubt that these Venusians bore a fundamental kinskip with the dark-skinned races of Earth Blood plasma, hair structure, and other physiological p he no me na proved Earth's dark children were more neartly related to the Venusians than to their own rerestrial brethren.

All this Gary Lane had known in advance. So it was with no surprise he addressed himself to the Venusian court. He did, bonever, despite the intensity of his purpose, in some din recess of his mind find time to marvel that the racial characteristics of the colored men, sometimes mildly amusing at home, were here litted and dignified by universal usage to a station of hish immortance.

The great vaulted Council chamber, with its curving spires and gaudily tinted walls; the bright colored raiment, the elaborate equipage and formality with which the Venusians embellished their pomp, on Earth might have exacted derision. Here they

seemed the normal, the true and graceful and cultured thing.

A ND if there was a certain childlike love of color and circumstances in the Venusian heart, it was no juvenile transfer the Mornison weekends.

A love of color and circumstances in the Venusian heart, it was no juvenile attention the Venusian overlords turned upon Lane's words. They itstened carefully and thoughfully to what he had to say, then conferred briefly amongst themselves. Finally their Chief Councillor turned to him. "Your story is fantastic, but there

is a certain ominous ring of truth in its telling. Still we do not quite understand. Why have you come to Venus? What would you have of us?"

"One of the four things," answered Gary, "requisite to our escaping our own solar galaxy that we may seek the cause which threatens to bring about our doom. We need from you-fuel. Sufficient stores of precious neurotrope, which only your planet produces. It is the only fuel with great enough power in small enough quantity to serve our purposes."

"And how much," asked the Venusian spokesman, "of this fuel would you need?"

"A minimum of five thousand tons."

"Five thousand tons!" The noblemen murmured amongst themselves restlessly. Their leader

bent a shrewd hard glance upon Gary. "That is much fuel, Earthman." "We have far to go," replied Gary.

"From here to Mars . . . from Mars to Jupiter . . . then outward, beyond this universe itself. Five thousand tons of neurotrope is barely enough for our needs."

"It is also enough," reminded the other, "to fuel the whole of your Earth fleet for a trip to Venus." "Yes," acknowledged Gary, "I sup-

pose that's true. But this is a relatively short trip, whereas-" Then he stooped suddenly, the implication of the other's words striking him. "But surely you can't think-1"

"Our relationship with your planet," said the Chief Councillor slowly, "has not always been . . . pleasant. We have small reason to place great faith in your words and promises: none whatsoever to turn over to you a supply of the only important military weapon we possess. Unless, of course

Gary grasped the straw eagerly. 6Vne 22

"Unless you would be willing to show your good faith by disclosing to us, in return, an Earthly secret vital to our defense."

"But," faltered Gary, "I know no such secret."

"I think you do. You came here in a spacecraft. It contains the secret we want. The knowledge of the hypatomic motor which drives it 19 Gary's heart sank. He turned to

Hugh Warren. "Tell them, Hugh, what you told us

on the trip here." Warren did so. The councillors

were courteous but unmoved. Their chief merely shrugged as he made re-"The situation is even worse than I

thought. Earth's government is so jealous of its military secrets that it does not entrust them even to the Patrolmen who fight in its cause. No. gentlemen I am afraid-"

T was the girl, Nora Powell, who interrupted him.

"But, Excellency," she cried, springing forward, "you can't do this! You can't risk the very existence of a dozen worlds for the sake of a selfish principle. You can't turn us away like this, Don't you realize what these men have dared already? Disgrace and death at the hands of their compatriots, unless our mission succeeds. We are exiles, fugitives from Earth, fighting alone and single-handed to protect Earth and all Sol's other children from-" The councillor said, "Yes, we have

heard the news by ultrawaye radio of your er melodramatic escape from Earth. Surely, my dear young lady, you do not think we are taken in by such a ruse? It is an exquisitely imaginative tale. But we find it scarcely credible that five learned scientists and a crew of Solar Patrolmen should 'steal' a ship against the will of Earth's government.

"It is more likely-much more likely-that your world, in order to gain a sufficient supply of our vital

fuel, has planned this little drama."

"Why," burst out Flick Muldoon indignantly, "that's nonsense! Begging your pardon, Excellency, but that

idea's as crazy as hell! We did this on our own book in order to-"

But Gary stopped him before the irate cameraman's outspoken indignation should only worsen their plight. He asked quietly, "That is your final

and considered decision?" The councillor nodded for himself

and his associates. "It is. When you return to Earth you may tell your government we of

Venus are not fools. And now, farewell."

He nodded to a retinue of guards. Short minutes later the dejected little group was being led back toward the spaceport.

For the most part they were silent, each lost in the overwhelming sadness of his own thoughts. Only one spoke, and he in a mutter. That one was

Flick Muldoon. "Not fools, eh? I wonder if he'd

like to make book on that, . . . " "CO," said Hugh Warren, "that seems

S to be that. What do we do now, Gary? Give up?"

Gary said, "I don't know what to do, Hugh." "I am afraid," sighed Dr. Anjers, "our mission is a failure. Perhaps it-

were best we go back to Earth and throw ourselves on the elemency of the World Council." "You maybe," said the skipper of

the Liberty ruefully, "but not me, I'm in it too deep. Well, Gary, better make up your mind."

"We go on," decided Lane suddenly. "That's all we can do. Swallow this failure and go on to Mars. Perhans there our plea will meet with more suc-

CRSS.11

"But," demurred Dr. Bryant, "if we

lack sufficient fuel-"

"We must find some substitute," said Gary. But even as he said it, he knew he was guilty of wishful thinking. There was no substitute for neurotrope. There were many fuels capable of adaptation to the explosion chamber of hypatomic motors, but none compact enough and powerful enough to make possible the long, sustained flight which lay before them.

Warren said, "You're the doctor." and turned to the control studs, setting the stops for the next leg of their journey, that which must carry them 200,000,000 miles through space to the crimson, arid comet of Mars.

As he depressed the proper button, lights flashed and relays clicked. Small bells jangled in the bowels of the ship. setting unseen engineers and crewmon to the fulfillment of their tasks.

Skipper Warren smiled drearily, "Well, at any rate," he said, "we have the satisfaction of knowing that fuel or no fuel, we have under us the smoothest little ship in space. Mile for

mile it will give us more speed per pound of fuel than any other ship-" He stopped suddenly, lurching and grasping for support, startled into si-

lence as the deck beneath him bucked and quivered violently. Someone signified. Nora screamed a little scream of dismay. Only by grasping an unright of the control turret did Gary Lane keep himself from tumbling bruisingly across the room. Flick Muldoon, victim of an unexpectedly

violent threepoint landing, glared up irately from the floor. "Smoothest little ship in space, eh? It's sure acting like it now."

But Captain Hugh Warren's face had suddenly drained of color. Now his hands smashed open the ship's intercommunicating system, and he

bawled, "IVe're caught in on enemy

tractor beam! All hands at battle stations! Stand by to repel boarders!" But overlapping his command came

that of a second voice, one crisp and cool and pleasantly amused,

"I shouldn't if I were you, Captain, You see, we're already alongside, with our guns trained on you. It would be wiser to bow to the inevitable." "But what . . . who . . .?" gasped

Dr. Bryant,

Hugh Warren turned from his controls with a shrug of resignation, and in a voice of gathering despair, "Troubles," he said, "never come singly. Now it's pirates."

MINUTES later he was proven correct. There came the grating clamor of spacecraft in embrace, the hiss of opening airlocks, and into the Liberty strode a band of Earthmen, bulgerclad and armed to the teeth. With the swift efficiency of long

practice, these men dispersed throughout the ship to accomplish their marauding aims. Only their leader and a lieutenant refrained from piratical activity. These came to the bridge of the Liberty, and there with an ease and calmness Gary Lane found amazing under the circumstances, addressed themselves to the skipper of the invaded vessel

"Greetings, Captain. No hard feelings, I hope? If you'll just toss your sidearms over into the corner-There. that's better. No reason we shouldn't eniov a pleasant little chat until my men have completed their mission."

"Mission?" grated Warren savagely, "What mission? Damn your rascally hide, we're no merchantman. This is a cruiser of the Solar Space Patrol." The corsair chieftain chuckled

pleasantly. "Why, yes, Captain. So we noticed. That's our mission. I thought it would

be a good joke to stop you-just to see if we could, you know. And as a matter of proof, in case anyone should ever contest our claim, I've asked my men to remove the insignia from the uniforms of each of your crew. Sorry to

seem impelite. Captain, but if you wouldn't mind tossing me your epaulettes . . . just as a little souvenir, you bnow...... Hugh Warren's face, which had been

apoplectic with rage, now froze in

Larkspur O'Day."

slack-jawed wonder "I-joket" he stammered. "Just to see if you could? Souvenir! There's only one pirate in space crazy enough to do a thing like this. You must

be-" The marauder smiled amiably. "Well, now," he drawled, "that's right flattering of you, Captain, Allow me to introduce my alf. My name is O'Day.

CHAPTER VII

Moon of Madness

AND he pushed back the quartzite helmet of his bulger, exposing the whitest smile, the handsomest face, the laughingest pair of eyes, all topped by the most unruly mon of cinnamon hair. Gary Lane had ever seen. A buccaneer the man might be, but he could equally well have been an artist's model for a gav and laughing cavalier of the Seventeenth Century. "Lark O'Day!" gasped Nora Powell.

She knew the name, as did all Earthmen and women with a snark of romantic imagination in their 'systems. Lark O'Day was a privateer whose exploits were so remarkable as to be almost legendary. Though a tremendous price was offered for his apprehension by the harassed merchantmen of Earth's flect, there were few but had a sneaking admiration for this gallant and quixotic young champion of derring-do, who, alone in this late day of ultra-civilization, carried on the traditions of an earlier Robin Hood or Dick Tumin.

Though no rare cargo of precious gems or valuable ores was safe from the attentions of Lark O'Day, it was not only such things which tempted his forays. When the traitorous rebel government of the tiny planetoid Ceres had fled its orb with a ransom of priceless gems rayaged from the imperial coffers, he it was who had apprehended the traitors, delivered upon them a swift and merciless nunishment, then sent to Ceres' beauteous Princess Alicia a gorgeous crown encrusted with the finest of the stolen gems . . , retaining only (as his fee for services rendered) those jewels which found no place in the coronet

He it also was who, when Earth's government dared not openly accuse that brilliantly ruthless business typeron, Jeremiah Drawen, of establishing slave colonies on Earth's lunar output, whisted the true years, beld him incommunicado until a court, declaring him legally dead, broke up his financial empire . . then returned him to Earth borribly and ineradicably branded across the brow with a cicatr's which theologisms identified as the

And it was Lark O'Day who, for a whim, had stopped on its maiden voyage the Orestes, greatest luxury liner ever built by man, for the sole purpose of stealing one kiss from the ripe, bewildered lips of the newly crowned (Mate Theisterne)."

This, then, was the nature of their attacker. And though Gary Lane knew the man to be a thief, daredevil, and desperado, be could not help but like

t him at first sight. Nor was even Captain Hugh Warren, who should have been furious, more than mildly amused at this latest prank of the void's piratir cal playboy.

He chuckled and stripped off the gold braid emblems for which O'Day asked, tossed them toward the priva-

asked, tossed them toward the privas teer.

"Here you are," he laughed, "and welcome. I'm afraid I have no right to

wear them any more, anyway. At least, that's what my commander would say." O'Day glanced at him curiously. "What? Say, wait a minute! This

isn't the Liberty? You're not the ones I heard about on the radio? The ones who stole a brand new cruiser and—"

HE PAUSED, then rocked with infectious laughter. Whatever strain had existed on the Liberry's bridge disappeared as all joined blm in his mirth. When finally the redhead had regained his composure, he picked up the fallen epaulettes, returned them to Warren with a courtly bow.

"My apologies, Captain. I am afraid I cannot take these. It appears we're both in the same boat, figuratively as well as literally speaking, And, after all, there is 'honor amongst thieves', byou know. But-tell me'? All I have beard is the World Council's side of the story. I'm sure the whole truth must be interesting. Tell me about it." So they odd him the entire table Of

so they togo time the entire take. Of Lane's discovery, the attack in the Observatory, the World Council's refusal to grant a ship, and the subsequent theft of the Liberty. Of their recent adventure on Venus. As Gary spoke, the laughter faded

from the corsair's lips and eyes. A new seriousness gathered about the corners of his mouth and anger tightened his lean, lithe figure.

He interrupted, frowning "Inst a

moment. These calculations of yours -vou're sure they're right?"

"If mathematics is a pure science,

ves." "And the Venusian governmentyou say it refused to give you the fuel

you need?" "That's right," said Gary glumly, "and without it, I'm afraid---"

He shrugged. But Lark ODay

turned sharply to his lieutenant. In his voice was a note which the others had not heard before. It proved beyond need of demonstration why laughing Lark O'Day could command a hardbitten crew as his. "Call the men, Mark. Get them

aboard the Black Star and place every hand at battle stations. Open the gun ports. Not short range-the troposphere rotors. Prepare for immediate action. If those damned fools-"

He soun to Waren angrily. "Captain, may I request the use of your radioman and signal turret for a short time?"

"Why-why, yes," faltered Warren. "Good! Then we'll teach those idiots to sacrifice an entire system to their own selfish greed!"

"What are you going to do?" demanded Gary.

O'Day laughed, a single explosive bark in which was little mirth. "Do? Why, I'm going to get you that fuel you need, of course! The Venusian Council knows me of old . . . and they know what the Black Star's guns can

do. I'm going to call them now and tell them that unless they load your fuelbins to the last millimeter I'll blast Sun City off the face of their stinking planet. Come along if you want!" And he headed for the radio turret. What happened after that was anti-

climax. The effect of Lark O'Day's little speech to the Venusian Council was a measure of his greatness. He

talked and they listened. They demurred and he raised his voice a note. They complained and that note became a warning note. They entered a half-hearted refusal and he stopped

asking and started telling them what they must do . . . or else. They capitulated, servilely. A short time later the Liberty was once again nestling in a Sun City cradle: this time gorging its belly with the five thousand tons of neurotrope for which Gary had unsuccessfully pleaded. The only difference between this arrangement and the one Lane had suggested was that the Venusians were not naid cash on the line for the vital fuel. That was

Lark O'Day's idea. "Not a damn cent," he said. "Serves them right for being so stingy with it before. This will teach them a lesson. And-" He grinned-"if your conscience bothers you, you can pay them when we come back, if our trip is suc-

cessful." "We?" said Nora Powell. "Our trip?"

Lark O'Day grinned at her happily. "Why, sure," he drawled, "You don't think I'd let an expedition like this get away without me being aboard, do you? That's my fee for helping out in a pinch. You don't mind, do you, if I

ioin the party?" Lane said, "Mind! We're tickled to death to have you," And he really meant it.

CO SET the Liberty forth upon the second leg of its quest. Nor was it now a halting leg upon which they limped. For their bins were filled to the brim. "With enough fuel -- " as Flick Muldoon put it-"to drive us from here to Hades and back, with lav-

overs at Erewhon and Shangri-la!" This phase of the journey was not so frenzied as had been the brief shuttle from Earth to Venus. For Mars lay not in conjunction with Earth, but in opposition to the green planet. Their course bore them sunward from Venus, inside the orbit of Mercury, then outward again two bundred million miles to where slow Mars, pursuing its inexorable course, should meet them in celestial renderzous.

Thus the first week of their twenty day voyage was a far from pleasant experience. Nearing Venus they had experienced a sample of Sol's heat-dealing abilities. Now, as they flashed yet farther sunward, Gary Lane and his companions realized that this had been indeed but a tiny taste of what was to

Hour by bour the temperature within the Liberty rose as flaming radiation lashed at the cruiser's hull with sourges of flame. It scarcely mattered that the refrigerating unit strained and labored like a floundering Titan. The metal walls were unbearable to touch, and cool drinks were but a sop to bodies which oozed perspiration from every pore like desert-parched sponges.

pole hat execute pattern spingers, conditioning system functioned perfectly, its vents and fasts had no cond sir with which to hathe their bodies. From its sputs gusbed blasts of withering heat, scarcely less endurable than the thick-y stagnant air of unwentilated corridors. One by one the travelers shed layers of uneventilated corridors. One by one the travelers shed layers of uneventilated corridors. One by one the travelers shed layers of uneventilated shorts, while those off luty—and Nora Powell—for models shorts, while those off luty—and Nora Powell—for models yake show the based that the sanctuary of stripped releasation in their private quarter.

To GARY LANE'S unspacetrained eye it appeared that save for this raw discomfort the period passed without incident. Once, to be true, there was a time when it seemed they would never swing out, past, and away from the sky-filling crimson globe which is Earth's sun. And once there came a breathless moment when it seemed the Liberty choked and throbbed in midflight, shuddered violently... then ploughed along her course.

But he was not spaceman enough to read meaning into these episodes. It was not until much later, when they had recrossed the Mercurial orbit and already the scorching heat was a fading memory, that Captain Hugh Warren told him how near they had come to disaster.

"Nin and tuck there for a while." he

confessed, "just as we reached perigee. Even at our rate of speed I didn't think we were going to make it for a minute. And we might not have, either, if it hadn't been for O'Day."

"What are you talking about?" demanded Lane.

Warren grinned. "Heard of sunbaths, haven't you? Well, all of us nearly took one. Only not in the sun's rays, but in old Sol itself. Remember that time day before yesterday when the ship stalled for a minute, then trembled and went on?"
"Yes. I thought something had cone

wrong with the motors."
"It did," grunted Warren. "Solar rays locked 'em. Hysteresis, you know. If O'Day hadn't jumped to those controls and done something—God knows what—Sol's gravitation might have

pulled us in and then . . . blooie!

"I'm telling you, I'm glad he's along
on this trip. Frankly, I don't know
whether I could have pulled us out of
it myself."

Gary said, "And I'm glad I didn't know about it until it was all over! It is all over? We're in good shape now?"

"Yes, Though I'm afraid the jets

may be a bit warped from the beating they took. Not enough to cause us any trouble, I guess, but we'll have to have them fixed up when we get to Mars."

Mars."

"And that should be—?"

"Oh, at least another ten days, Might

as well relax and enjoy yourself. Speaking of which—" Warren's tone altered suddenly—"there's something I'd like to mention. I hardly know how to say

it, but—"
Gary stared at him puzzledly. "Well.

go ahead."
"It's about Nora . . . Miss Powell.

I mean—I never quite understood the setup between you two. I don't want to poach on a friend's preserves, but in this instance—"

Gary said slowly, "Why—I have no strings on Nora, if that's what you mean, Hugh. We're friends, but—" "But there's no understanding be-

"But there's no understanding between you?"

"No."

Warren laughed relievedly. "Well, in that case, you wouldn't have any objection if I—well, sort of showed her around a little? Maybe pointing out, meanwhile, that a certain Hugh Warren isn't a bad sort of guy?"

"No," said Gary even more slowly.
"No, of course not, Hugh. You have every right in the world to do so."

It was all very open and above board. Nora was a fine girl and Gary admired her greatly. Hugh was a great gay and an old friend. In view of these and an old friend. In view of these that night after dinner, took. Norsis, arm in his and wandered off with her to the observation deck of the Liberty, young Dr. Lane should have found himself suddenly seized with a restlessces and impattience quite outside the earnest scientist with a burning mission hefore him.

SO THE long hours rolled by, becoming days, and the slow days
to
passed until at length the sun lay far
to
behind them. a dwindling ochre glow
in the black of space. And before them,
increasingly larger with each hour of
the
light, lay a huge crimson sphere, scored
the with a multitude of crisscross scars.

about which endlessly circled a pair of hurting satellites. The planet Mars. Toward that they flashed at constant driving speed, filled with a gathering impatience now that the second stage of their quest was so near completion. Only three men seemed in any way perturbed by the approaching nearness of the red planet. They, significantly enough, were the three trained spacemen upon whom evolved the duty of guiding the Liberty from

orb to orb.

Flick Muldoon who, mechanically inclined, had shown intense interest in the technique of spacellight throughout the journey, was surprised, on that day when finally their destination loomed directly before them, to note a growing apprehension in the eyes and actions of the three astroactions.

O'Day was in the pilot's seat, his fingers poised and ready above the innumerable banked studs. Of him Flick asked, "What's up, Lark? You're as fidgety as a yogi on a cactus mat-

ragety as a yogt on a cactus mattress."

O'Day dismissed the query with a swift, impatient shake of the head. "Not now, Flick, if you don't mind.

, I'm busy."

Muldoon transferred his questioning to Warren.

"Busy? What's all the fuss about?
All we've got to do is slide into Mars
and make a landing, isn't it?"

But Warren, too, showed no inclination to talk. He said to the man at the controls, "Coordinates look good, O'Day. Both moons are on this side. Of course, that may or may not mean anything. You never can tell."

anything. You never can tell."

"What is this?" demanded the now
completely haffled Muldoon of the only
remaining space officer. "You guys act

tians are hostile?"

Licutenant MacDonald smiled thinly. "It's not the Martians we're worried about. Flick. It's those damned

moons."
"What about them?"

"Well, we want to make sure we clear them, that's all. You see, Marshas two moons, Deimos and Phobox. They're trickly little gadges to calmon the mother planet. Both of them ravel like hats out of bell. The inner one, Phobos, takes only seen hours and thirty-nie minutes to make a complete revolution. Deimos second along ever faster. Though it's three hos, if gallong through its orbit in thirty bours and twenty minutes."

"So," Muldoon said, "What? You're not afraid of one of them hitting us, are you? We're traveling faster than they are. And if you know where they're going to be at any given moment—"

"No, we don't expect one of them to

hit us. The thing we have to guard against is our hitting one of them. You see, those satellites have peculiarities. One of them is that every once in while, for no known reason, they suddenly cease being tiny halls of inert matter hurtling about their primary, and for a hrief period become tremendously notent magnets.

"Technicians have been studying the problem for a long time, but so far haven't discovered the solution. All we know is that the oddity exists. And so long as it does, Deimos and Phohos

an remain a constant hazard to spacecraft approaching Mars."

"Magnets?" said Muldoon. "You mean they exert force on us? Drag us down to them like—"

remaining space officer. "You guys act like you're expecting trouble. What's the matter? Do you think the Martians are hostile?"

down to them like—"
"Like," interrupted Captain Warren with a sudden bellow of dismay, "this! Lark, throw clear!"

In the split of a second a change had marred the smooth, even flight of the Liberty. There came upon Muldoon a swift and sickening sensation of increased weight. Despite himself he lurched and tumbled forward to his knees aware that the ship's nose had spun dizially off course, and that the criuser itself was streaking at increased seed in a direction unpolited by the

Then everything happened at once.

Great heads of perspiration springing from his hrow, Lark O'Day began pounding his controls like a master organist playing the keyhoard of a delicate instrument. Captain Warren leaped to the audiphone, harked sharp commands to the men in the engine room below. And over the inter-communicating system MacDonald was crying hurried instructions to crew and passengers alike.

"Go to emergency quarters immediately! Hammock yourselves for crash

d landing!"
"Crash landing!" gasped Muldoon.

pilot.

"Here!" Warren grasped his arm, there him into one of the well-padded percussion chairs of the control turret. "Lock your safety belt and relax. Everything's going to be all right . . . I hope."

O'Day. The one time privateer took time from his labors for an encouraging grunt.

"I think so. We're hooked, but I think I can bounce her down on a slant.

Hold tight, everybody."

Then in the vision lens which

mapped that segment of space immediately before them. Flick Muldoon glimpsed the rapidly swelling globe which was Deimos, lesser moon of Mars. Like a great, gaunt blood-red rock it looked; quartering, then halving, then completely blotting out the

vision plate. Muldoon was momentarily aware of razor-sharp cliffs high rocky plateaus. and jagged tors unsoftened by a blade of vegetation. Then the motors whined in shrill and screaming protest. The Liberty's nose came up, and the ship struck with a resounding crash, Struck . . . bounced . . . shook itself angrily

... and ground to a grating stop. . . .

CHAPTER VIII

Power from Mars

"WELL!" said Flick Muldoon. "Everything happens to us!" Lark O'Day pushed a final stud which silenced the Liberty's motors. The ship lay still upon the satellite's

rocky surface "That," said the pilot moodily, "is that! You all right, fellows? How

about you, Muldoon?" Flick eased bimself from his chair,

flexed arms and legs gingerly. "They seem to be all right," he admitted cautiously. "I'll study them for defects when the goose pimples go down."

Mac was already at the intercommunicating system, rasping queries to the far chambers of the ship, "Everybody OO? No casualties?"

The responses were encouraging if somewhat blasphemous. Typical was the reply from Slops, the ship's chef, He snarled irately, "I'm all right, Lootenant, but did you say we was to

bave soup for dinner?" "Eb? Why, yes. But-"

"'Cause if you did, everybody bet-

ter come on up to the galley right now with spoons. Dinner's slip-sloppin' all over the floor."

There came the sound of footsteps on the ramp. The door burst open. admitting that quartet which Lark O'Day had humorously dubbed "the brains of this here outfit." All were excited. Gary Lane demanded in-

tently, "Hugh . . . Lark . . . What is it? Where are we? We're not on Mars?" Warren shook his head. We are about twelve thousand miles short of our goal. This is what you might call 'time out by command per-

formance,' We're gray-locked. Have you tried to make her respond, Lark?" O'Day had again been jiggling the activating studs. Now he said, "Yeah, but it's no go. Just our luck. We've blundered into one of Deimos' unpredictable magnetic periods. We're frozen tighter than a pollywor in a

Plutonian puddle." "How long," demanded Muldoon. "does this here magnetic grab operate?"

Dr. Bryant answered for the navigators.

"That, Muldoon, is as unpredictable as the phenomenon itself, Sometimes these periods last but a few hours: at other times they are sustained for months. I'm afraid we must just resign ourselves to remaining here as long as need be."

"Which being the case," drawled Lark O'Day, rising and stretching nonchalantly, "I might as well take a stroll outside and make sure we didn't split any seams when we pancaked. Come along, Hugh?"

He lifted down a brace of fabricoid bulgers from their racks on the control room wall. But before he and the skipper had time to don the airtight suits, there came an interruption not so alarming as unexpected. From the starboard airtick athwart the ship came the rasp of an entrance buzzer, then the wheeze of escaping air as someone or something outside employed the opening apparatus

For a moment the companions stared at each other in bewilderment, then, as one, they turned and dashed to-

ward the portal.

They arrived just as the inner door of the lock opened, admitting two bulger-clad figures. The taller of these stepped forward with hands outstretched in gesture of peaceful intent, and a quiet, pleasant voice said, "Greeting, friends. We bid you well-

come to our tiny refuge."

Then the bulger helm was thrown back, and they were gazing upon the slant-eyed, ivory-skinned countenance

of a native Martian.

NOW again the ex-pirate, Lark O'Day, proved himself a valuable adjunct to the party. He moved to confront the newcomers, conducting the amenities of greeting as only one with a knowledge of Martian custom and tradition could.

"Welcome, O brother of the ancient world," he said politely. "Your presence is like water to a sun-parched tongue. We are honored by your visit"

Never a word of surprise or astonishment. Never a query as to whence came the two interlopers. And though the old Martian's impassive face moved not a muscle, it was apparent he was pleased to find amongst this group one who respected the formalities of his people.

He bowed in turn, and with a polite-

breathed, "You are most kind. The mongrel barks unbidden at the courteous man's gate,"

ous man's gate."

"The bright sun also rises without warning," answered O'Day gallantly.

"kindling fresh life in flagging souls.
Will your lordship deign to brighten
our humble vessel with his presence?"
The Martian bowed, and without

The Martian bowed, and without further word he and his companion followed the others to the recreation

room.

There, when all were settled comfortably, the visitor reopened the conversation. To the relief of all the Earthmen he did so in a manner at once pleasant and abrupt.

"I am charmed, Cuptain—" It was to O'Day be spoke, for the pirate chieftain, like Warren, affected the insignia of a space captain—"by your acceptance and usage of our Martian rites of greeting. But proud as I am of our ancient customs I must confess that

when urgency presses, our formalities consume too much time. Let us, therefore, speak in the manner of your people, and—as you Earthmen so aptly put it—'get down to business.'
"You know, of course, you have

landed on the planetoid Chou-shen, that which Earthmen call Deimos. I trust your craft was not damaged in the landing?"

O'Day said, "I think not, sir, We

were about to investigate when you arrived. But I think I brought the Liberty down without any trouble." "That is good. And now, if you

"That is good. And now, if you please, just what is your purpose in approaching Mars?"

Lark said dubiously, "Well, sir, that's quite a long story. I'd like my friend here to explain it. He knows the facts better than I. Meanwhile, perhaps your companion—" He nodded to the second and somewhat slighter Martian who so far had not removed his helmet—"might make himself more comfortable—?"

himself more comfortable—?"

The old Martian permitted himself
a faint smile. He murmured, "Though
your ship is on Martian soil, it is a

part of Earth. And it is written, 'The wise traveler eats of native bread.' So I suppose it will do no harm—" He turned and spoke swift, rippling

sentences to his associate. After a moment's hesitation, the other vested himself of his headpiece. . . .

Himself?

IT was no male Martian who stood shyly smiling at the assemble. Earthmen, but a girl. Her long almond-shapet yes were also-baled ulustrous, modestly concealed beneath lowered lids which rested like the extentory of the state of the state of palest amber sheen. Her hair was black of palest amber sheen. Her hair was black not palest amprock and piled bight upon her head in an elaborate but striking coffure. Looking at her, Gary Lane was

stricken with admiration for the gentle charm and beauty of Martian women. She was, he thought swiftly, the most beautiful creature he had ever seen—well, the *eccond* most beautiful, anyway. His betraying eyes sought, anyway. His betraying eyes sought, colored faitly.

Flick Muldoon, a dependable has rometer of feminien pulchittude, gulped audibly and might have whistled his admiration had not Hustled his admiration had not hisly have been been been been been been been this, jotted the pucker from his lips. But it was upon Lark O'Day whom he sight of the girl had its most devastuting effect. The handsome corsair's eyes widened in frank admiration; a spark lighted within their moss-brown depths, and his his parted.

Young Dr. Lane began his tale.

"Well, you see, sir--"
The Martian said, "My name is
Kang Tsao. And this is my daughter.

Pen-N'hi."

The Earthmen introduced themselves swiftly. Then again Gary embarked on the telling of his oft-told tale.

Here in this quiet room, on one of the solar system's tiniest satellites, he found his most attentive audience. The fold Martian listened gravely, attentively. When he had finished, Kang Tsuo said, "If find this a strange, but not incredible narrative, Dr. Lane, You mentioned proof; mathematical computations. Might I see those proofs?"

And when some time later, he lifted this eyes from the perusal of the other world scientist's calculations . . .

"There is no doubt," he said, "but that everything you have said is completely and horribly true. One question, however, you have left unanswered. Why did you come to Mars?"

"Because," answered Gary frankly, "there is something we need from your planet. We know, or believe, that the authors of this disaster threatening Earth dwell not in our solar system but beyond it. There is no spacecraft known to men capable of carrying us outside our own little solar galaxy. But if all human intelligence, the wit and wisdom of every planet, could be brought to contribute its portion, such a spacecraft could be built. It was our hope to gain the four requisite elements from the four major planets. The secret of the hypatomic drive from Earth: fuel from Venus: from Jupiter the secret of faster-than-light travel-" "And from Mars?"

a "From Mars," said Gary slowly, "a n vital gift. Your most cherished defensive military secret . . . the power shield. Yes, we know you have it sir. We know it because-I am asbamed to say-you have been forced on several occasions to employ it against Earth's -nace-vessels.

"Your science has discovered some form of force field which is impregnable against the onslaught of every known weapon. Our heaviest HE shells, our heat beams, needle rays, and rotor-blasts alike are harmlessly diverted by the magnificent barrier your people have invented.

"With such a shield must the Liberty be equipped if she is to dare a long and arduous trip through space to a hostile bourne. Not only is the entire journey made in peril of collision with rogue asteroids, bits of cosmic debris, and the like . . . but when we reach our destination we will need protection against any conceivable weapon our enemy may bring against us.

"Therefore, that for which we ask is a vital prerequisite to the safety and success of our journey."

DR. KANG pondered briefly. Then, at length, "It is true," he admitted, "we possess a force-shield such as you have mentioned. But you have made one error. It is not altogether the defensive weapon you imagine it. It is, indeed, the reason your craft lies now on Deimos."

"What?" interjected Hugh Warren, "You mean the intensified magnetiza-

tion-"

"Exactly, Captain. That is my reason for dwelling here on this outpost, twelve thousand miles from my beloved homeland. We of Mars have installed here a tremendous power plant capable of projecting its magnetic beam upon any vessel which approaches our planet. There is another similar station on Phobos. Master scientists control each of these laboratories. When spacecraft which we have reason to believe may have hostile intent approach Mars. switches are thrown converting these satellites into gigantic magnets of tre-

mendous nower

"That is why--" He smiled a bit ruefully-"That is why, on several occasions. Earth ships have crashed on Deimos and Phobos. Because it was clear they planned to disturb the quietude of our community." "But." cried Flick Muldoon, "how

about us? We didn't come here with a chip on our shoulders. Our purpose

was peaceful enough."

Dr. Kang said softly, "This I know, my friend, now. But you must admit that appearances were against you. You came foreheralded by bulletins of treachery and theft on Earth, of strongarmed compulsion and allegiance with a privateer on Venus. We did not know what you wanted but-" The old Martian shrugged-"we thought it best to deter your arrival until you could be questioned."

O'Day, whom it was hard to believe had heard a single word of the conversation, so raptly had his attention been riveted upon the ivory-skinned scientist's daughter, said abruptly, "And now that you know, Dr. Kang, what

is your decision?"

Kang's long dark eyes seemed to withdraw within the curiously involute epithelial folds of their lids. For a long moment he considered the question. Silent he sat, and as impassive as a carven Buddha of the Earth race whose members he so strongly resembled. Then he said, "There can be but one answer, my friend. And on a matter such as this I am free to speak not only for myself but for all my people. You shall have that for which you came." "We may, Doctor?" cried Garv Lane.

"No kidding?" velled Muldoon,

"Say-1" breathed Captain Warren.

The old man halted their expressions of gratitude with a turn of the hand.

"Yes, you shall have what you need. We of Mars are a peaceloving race, That which you have chosen to call a 'military weapon' we employ simply and solely as a defensive measure against aggression. But now it seems the time has come to turn this weapon against an interloper of unguessed strength. Therefore, you shall have what you need. But there is one small stipulation-"

Lane thought grimly, "This is it. The By in the ointment. You never get something for nothing." But aloud he

asked politely, "And that is, Dr. Kang-?" "Simply." replied the aged Martian. "that my daughter and I be permitted

to install the equipment on the Liberty ourselves-" "Why, of course!" said Gary.

"And," continued Dr. Kang, "that we further be permitted to join your party." And for the first time a flicker of expression crossed his features. A smile touched the corners of his lips. "You see, my friend, though we of Mars are called an impassive people, we are not entirely without curiosity. This quest upon which you are embarked has about it a breathtaking challenge which stirs me greatly. I am an old man, but I am not unlearned. It is possible that my knowledge may prove of some value-"

DR. BRYANT said, "Please, Dr. Kang! Not another word! should be not only hanny but troud to welcome you to our party,"

Lark O'Day stirred restlessly. "But your daughter, Dr. Kang? It is a perilous trip. Scarcely the sort of ad-

venture for a girl of gentle breeding." "Where I go, there goes my daughter also. And I note that there is already

one woman of refinement and gentle breeding among you. I think-" said Dr. Kang-"I think it is not utterly unreasonable to expect my daughter will find herself surrounded by champions more than willing to assure her comfort and happiness."

And this time it was a full smile he turned upon the suddenly embarrassed Lark O'Day, Gray Lane chuckled too. It appeared that the supposedly "impassive" Martian did not lack. among other things, a delightful sense of humor . . .

CHAPTER IX

Speed Limit-186,000 MPS!

THUS it was arranged. Dr. Kang Tsao and his daughter, beautiful Kang Pen-N'hi, moved kit and equipment aboard the Liberty that very day. The events of the following week were days not so filled with adventure as with plain hard and dogged work.

At Dr. Kang's own suggestion the Liberty did not linger on Delmos until the installation of the new power shield should be complete.

"This discovery," said the Martian scientist, "is remarkably simple. With what little equipment my daughter and I have brought aboard, and with such standard stores as may be found aboard your ship, we can make the craft impregnable. So let us waste no time. but get under way. We shall make the installation as we fly to Jupiter."

And this they did, in plain sight of all the Liberty's staff and crew. Despite which, few were able afterward to say what had been done, or why such minor alterations should make such a tremendous difference.

Old Douglas Sebold, Chief Engineer of the Liberty, openly acknowledged his inability to grasp the force field's 48

method of operation.

"Come down here to the engine room, they did: the Martian man and his daughter. Fidgeted and fiddled around for a couple of hours without speaking ary a word to any of us except maybe a polite, 'Howivedo? G'bye!' And when they left, what had they did? Hooked up a little hunk of wire here and a condenser there and a thingamajigger somewhere else, none of which looks like it ought to do noth-

ing!" Lieutenant MacDonald made much

the same plaint. "They opened the control banks and threw a few shunts across the relays. Then they ran one cable to the hypos. But so far as I can see, what they did shouldn't make any great difference in the operation of the ship." He stared at Gary dubiously. "You don't think the old man's giving us the runaround, do you? Pretending to put out, when

really all he's doing is stealing the secret of Earth's hypatomic?" Lark O'Day, from the neighboring plot desk, looked up, glowering darkly. "Mac," he advised, "if I thought you really meant that, I'd come over there

and push your face so far down your throat you'd have a tapeworm's view of

your own stomach. Anybody who cracks about Dr. Kang-"

"Also cracks," grinned Gary, "about Kang's charming daughter. Pen-N'hi. Which Lark doesn't allow. But, no, Mac: I'm sure vou're mistaken. As soon as we reach the asteroid belt Dr. Kang has promised us proof that the force shield has been installed and is in operation."

With this assurance everyone had to be content, until ten days out from Mars the Liberty hove within range of that tremendous swarm of shuttling bodies which comprises the Bog, spaceman's term for the belt of myriad asteroids ranging in size from tiny granules of rock to life-sustaining mountains of matter larger than many satellites.

T WAS when they reached this point

that Dr. Kang offered his promised proof. As the leaders of the party gathered within the Liberty's control turret he said, "And now, for those of you who have not had the opportunity of seeing the Martian force shield operate, a little demonstration may be heartening. Who's at the controls? O'Day? Good! Larkspur, my friend

. . . you see that asteroid moving within our vision range to loft and starhoard?" O'Day, fingers flickering incessantly over the keyboard as the ship wove its way through the treacherous belt,

nodded tightly. "I see it," he grunted, "and I'm getting out of its way now. If that thing ever plowed into us, the Liberty would be one small blob of crumpled metal floating through space."

"On the contrary," said Dr. Kang smoothly, "you will make no attempt to avoid the planetoid. You will set a

course directly for it." "Directly-!" gulped Lark.

"Yes. If you will be so kind." Then Dr. Kang stepped to the board and depressed the single black stud be had installed on the instrument panel. "Steer directly for that rock at the greatest speed you can achieve."

O'Day essayed a grin that didn't quite iell. But with the eyes of Pen-N'hi upon him, he had no intention of showing the white feather. He merely shrugged.

"You're calling signals," he muttered . . . and did as the old Martian

directed With the die irrevocably cast, young

Dr. Lane could sympathize completely with the Liberty's pilot. He, too, felt

qualms of misgiving as the cruiser bore down at flashing speed upon a chunk of rock large enough to shatter the ship into billions of tortured rivers.

Nor was it pleasant to stare into the viewpane, watching that lethal asteroid loom ever larger and more deadly, now like a gray, grim, gaunt and fearsome stony beast, its gaping canyons vawned like fangs bared to destroy them. Nearer and nearer flashed the Liberty. Lane's heart missed a beat . . . then

another . . . then started pounding with an excitement which moistened the palms of his hands and dried his lips. He cast a nervous glance at Dr. Kang. But the aged Martian's features were everessionless.

Flick Muldoon was frankly appre-

hensive, and Nora Powell, standing next to Warren across the room, moved closer to the sturdy space captain as though to eke from his presence some breath of reassurance.

Nearer and yet nearer. And now they were almost upon the cosmic juggernaut. At the rate at which they were traveling, if something were not done now--immediately!--it would be but a matter of instants before-

Gary was not surprised to hear a cry rip from the group of awed watchers, Only a certain pride had prevented him from being the one to cry aloud. But it was little Dr. Aniers, cherubic face gray, who broke forth.

"O'Day, turn away! It's a failure! We're going to crash! Look out-1" But in that moment came a sudden. shuddering twist. Not hard, not damaging, not shocking, but a sensation as though the Liberty had plowed headlong into a mass of sponge rubber. The nose of the ship flew up, the dreadful vision in the viewpane swung suddenly out of sight-and a moment later the rock which had threatened certain death to all aboard lay far behind!

Dr. Kang smiled. "You see, my friends?" O'Day said wonderingly, "It-it

shunted us! Bounced us up and around it, away from it, as if we were a rubber hall!"

"Exactly," said the Martian, "Our ship is encased in a sphere of electrical force through which no matter can penetrate. A vielding barrier which absorbs the shock of collision. The Bog holds no more perils for us, my friends, You may if you wish, lock your controls and pursue a set course to our destination." "Well," said Flick Muldoon. "Well,

I'll be damned!"

THE Bog lay a trifle more than 120,-000,000 miles from Mars. Great Juniter swung in its gigantic orbit a full 225,000,000 farther beyond. Thus a journey of more than three Earth weeks' duration lay before the space questers. Merchantmen were wont to speak of this as a dreary, tedious journey, but those aboard the Liberty did not find it so. They had much with which to occupy their every waking hour.

For one thing, as the final stage of their adventure beckoned closer, it seemed to definitely decide a problem up to now left dangling. That of determining into exactly which quadrant of space should they direct their flight when-and if-they were successful in gaining from the Joyian council the fourth of their needful loans.

"Proxima Centauri," said Dr. Boris Aniers, "That is, of course, the goal toward which we must set our course." Gary said dubiously, "I'm not so sure. The studies of Millikin, and the

later research of Marquart and Thompson Blaine would seem to indicate that cosmic rays emanate not from that sector of space, but rather from the neighborhood of Sirius."*

"But," persisted the small Eurasian, "our main desire is to escape this galaxy. And certainly Proxima Centauri is our closet neighbor."

"Closest, yes. But by going toward it we travel in the opposite direction to that which I think we should go. No. Sirius is the star we must seek. There, if anywhere, lies the answer to

our problem."

Flick Muldoon stared from one to the other of the two wrangling scientists, his honest face wreathed in bewilderment. "Am I nuts?" he demanded, "or have

you two gone completely off base? You're talking about Proxima Centauri and Sirius like they were weekend excursions. If I haven't forgotten everything my astronomy prof told me. Proxlma Centauri is about four light years away. Sirius is twice that far. At the rate we're traveling it'll take us about 6.500 years to reach Proxy, and damn near 14,000 to get to the Dog! What do we do to live that long . . . eat vitamins?"

Lane smiled. "You'd better stick to photography, Flick, Don't you realize by now that our whole purpose in going to Jupiter is to learn the secret of faster-than-light travel? If they'll tell us this secret, we can reach our destination in-well. I don't know exactly how long. That will depend greatly upon how far we can exceed the socalled 'limiting velocity'."

Here Dr. Kang interpolated, "That my boy is the term I suggest you use

*Early investigators were unable to discern any one particular sector of space from which the mysterious cosmic rays seemed to emanate. The painstaking research of Larson T. Marquart (2034-92 A.D.) and Thompson Blaine (2041-99) subsequently determined, however, the point of heaviest emanation as being from that sector of space in which is found the Dog Star, Strius (Canis Major) .- Ed.

with the greatest respect. It is not merely the 'so-called' limiting velocity. The speed of light is actually the greatest velocity at which matter can travel and still retain its integral form. Beyond that speed, mass hecomes infinite. What happens then, no man knows. I am afraid we must reconcile ourselves to a long and wearisome voyage of nine Earth years."

Gary said tightly, "We can't afford nine years. I'm not thinking of our own discomfort, I'm remembering our computations. According to those figures, Sol's dwindling point will be reached not in years, but in months . . .

maybe weeks! Before we can reach our goal, the universe from which we are fleeing will exist no more!"

"All the more reason," insisted Dr. Boris Anjers, "for heading toward Proxima Centauri, my young friend. I am older than you, and have studied cosmic radiation for a great many years. I assure you, there is no reason to believe one extra-galactic destination is more likely than another."

GARY glanced at the man oddly. It was unlike Anjers to flaunt his age and wisdom; equally unlike the small scientist to rouse to such heights of nervous excitement. Gary said slowly, "Well, Dr. Anjers, this is a communal enterprise. I don't wish to dictate our course. I'm willing to place the deci-

sion to a vote of all our party." Dr. Bryant said quietly, "That will not be necessary, Gary. You have led

us most successfully up till now. I think we are all willing to accept your judgment." "You're darn tootin'!" said Mul-

And Dr. Kang said hlandly, "I, too, have perfect confidence in your decisions, Dr. Lane."

Anjers' round face puffed with petu-

lance. His bushy evebrows drew together. "Oh, very well!" he snapped in a tone almost a snarl, "But I warn you, you're making a great mistake!" And angrily he stomped from the room.

RUT to the man's credit, his pique did not last long. Before the day ended he had returned, as urbane as ever, with a contrite smile and an apology on his lips. So equanimity was restored aboard the Liberty, and that was good, for on a voyage such as this it was better to avoid all clash of per-

constities "We are fortunate," said Dr. Kang one night after Lark O'Day had reported an argument in the crew's quarters which had almost resulted in a free-for-all between the blasters and the mariners, "we number no Venusians or Iovians among our corps. It has been my observation that the members of these two races mingle poorly with the children of your world and mine. Of the four races, our two are the more easy-going, theirs the more emotional. Perhaps the early history of your Earth might have been less bloody had not your continent em-

Hugh Warren stared.

"Colonists? Are you trying to tell

colonists."

mankind aren't indigenous to Earth?" The ivory-tinted one's eyebrows lifted slightly. "But of course they are not. Captain. Surely you didn't believe-or did you? But how unreasonable to think that one small planet would breed more than a single species! You of the white-skinned race are the only true race of Earth." "We are?"

us, Dr. Kang, that the races of Earth's

"Why, surely! Just as all the true children of Venus are dark-skinned, and we of Mars amber-fleshed. Oh. there is a certain fundamental rootstock common to us all, I suppose. But any medical man can assure you our differences lie not only in the color of our skins. Our races show many physiological variations, Blood plasma, hair structure, distribution of sinews, skeletal articulation-"

Nora Powell asked, "Then the vellow races of Earth-the Chinese, Eskimos. Amerindians - were originally

natives of your planet?" Dr. Kang nodded.

"Just as the ebony hued natives of your Africa came originally from Venus: ves. On my planet are small colonies of white and black skinned humans, and on Venus are aboriginal tribes of yellow and white skinned men. It seems an inexorable law of nature that on every globe the native tribe should rise to supremacy, while the secondary groups should achieve to a lesser culture."

Gary said, "That is only partly true, Dr. Kang. Your Martian colonists on our Earth-or at least those who colonized the country known as China-bave ever been a great and cultured people. Our forefathers braced such a diversity of planetary called them 'backward,' but that was because they placed social culture above mechanistic advancement."

> "BUT, Dr. Kang," broke in Muldoon, "vou're implying that spaceflight existed God - knows - how - long - ago! Centuries . . . eons . . , before the launching of the Wentworth-Kroll experimental rocket in 1973!"*

^{*}Muldoon here ignores the two much earlier experimental rockets which left Earth in 1942 . . . that of Dr. Frazier Wrenn from Arizona and that of Doktor Erich von Adjund from Ber-En. (See Amozing Stories, Dec. 1939.) Sinoboth these morket flights eame to disastrons end. the history of rocket travel really begons with the launching of the Wentworth-Kroll slop, Primus,

Dr. Kang nodded. "And that is true. Spaceflight did exist countless centuries ago. It was achieved and perfected by a race now vanished. A race which persists today only in vestigial form. You will meet some of its

members a few weeks hence," "The Jovians?" demanded Gary. "You mean the Jovians once had a great civilization and visited all the

worlds? From 'way out there in their far orbit?" "Not exactly. But from their for-

mer planet."

"Former_2"

"Yes. The one through whose shattered remnants we have but recently passed,"

O'Day said dazedly, "The asteroid belt! That's right! Science does believe it once comprised a planet. It was destroyed mysteriously, some say by a gigantic tug of war waged hetween Jupiter and the sun; others say by internal explosion, millenia before civilization came to Earth, But-" His brows drew together thoughtfully

-"hut the Jovians are a blue-skinned race, Dr. Kang,"

"Quite so," agreed Kang. "And as such they are hespoken in the legends of my people. And-if I am not mistaken-also in your ancient records.* We should pity them, my friends. They were once a great and valiant empire; now they are decadent. Those of them who escaped the holocaust which destroyed their former worlds have taken refuge on luniter, and there live quietly, concerning themselves no longer with matters of solar government.

"It is piteous," mourned the old man, "to see a once noble people

*Such records do exist in Earthly levends. In many parts of the world may be found folk-tales concerning "blue-skinned" gods who brought to this planet the benefits of civilization -- Rd.

brought so low. But that is, and ever has been, the history of man's striv-

ings." "Centuries," mused Gary Lane.

"Thousands of years ago. I wonder-" "Wonder what, my friend?"

"I wonder if their downfall has anything to do with the problem we're tackling now. But-" Gary shook himself, ridding his mind of the sudden, uneasy thought-"hut of course that's nonsense! It couldn't possibly he . . . "

CHAPTER X

Death Sentence

Số TIME sped hy. And outward. ever toward the fringes of Sol's empire. flashed the Liberty on her all-important mission. The sun which but a few short weeks ago had been a blazing furnace threatening fiery annihilation to the space venturers had now dwindled to the apparent size of a tiny, glowing pea, half lost in the black depths behind them. A small, feebly glistening hody whose heat at this great distance was scarce sufficient to make its presence felt.

And as this great luminary shrunk, its offspring grew ever larger in the Liberty's vision plate. Now the fifth planet was a heaven-filling orh scant hours away. Already the cruiser had whisked through the orbit of Juniter's nine satellites and now, on a course

carefully set by Lark O'Day, Skipper Warren was preparing to drop the Liberty to Jupiter's surface. Muldoon, standing beside the space

patrolman as he fingered the studs. said wonderingly, "Boy, that's one hig planet, ain't it? Only-" His brow furrowed-"there's one thing I don't understand. How far away from it are we?"

"'Bout twenty thousand," answered

"Well, then, how come it hasn't gripped us yet? I should think a

thing as big as that would bave a gravdrag strong enough to clamp bold of us about three or four times this far away."

away."
Warren chuckled. "Appearances are deceiving, Flick. Don't let the ap-

parent size of Jupiter fool you."

"Huh? What do you mean?"

"Simply," explained the pilot, "that

the true planet Jupiter is not much larger than Earth."

"What? But I can see for myself---" "What you see is Juniter's tremendous atmosphere belt. For some reason never satisfactorily explained. Jupiter's gaseous protective envelope is more than a thousand times deeper than that of any other planet. That's why Earth's astronomical instruments always show Jupiter's mass to be so tenuous; with a specific gravity, in fact, less than that of water. Juniter is a gigantic cosmic fake; a buge bubble of semi-visious atmosphere in the heart of which is embedded only a tiny. normal-sized core of the more cobesive elements which so to make up a planet."

"Why, the big quack!" said Muldoon indignantly. Then an other thought struck him. "But say, if that's the case it must be colder than Tophet on that planet? Those miles upon miles of cloudbank should completely

blot out the sun."

O'Day nodded. "And so they do.
But on the other hand, they completely
blanket the cold of interstellar space.
You'll find Jupiter a dark, murky
planet, but one with a very pleasant
and equitable climate. Well—" He
nodded to Warren as the vision plate
before them was suddenly befilmed
with writhing tendrils of moisture-

d laden atmosphere—"we're diving into the cotton. From now on it's blind 't flight. Coordinates OO?"

a "OQ," said Warren briefly, and concentrated on the task of dropping the Liberty through unfathomable miles of ar enswaddling cloud to the tiny core within.

A SHORT time later his efforts gray well thinned, then parted, and once again the Liberty was scudding through clear atomsphere, sunless and damply gray, but not unpleasant. Above the virgin surface of a planet not unlike jungle-attewn Venus, great rivers sprawded through chains of rolling hills. The brown soil was resplaned not with wild, offfillingthy multicolored rut with wild, offillingthy multicolored and the property of the property of

at foliage.

y The rest was simple. Pangré, capital city, lay at the north polar extremity of Jupiter. They had but to follow
t, their compass to reach it. So in a
is space of time measurable by minutes
te the Liberty had attained and bowered
over the fourth of the great world
y, capitals that they bad visited on their
effight.

A bustle of activity on the spaceport below greeted their arrival. They asked and were give ne clearance. Smoothly Hugh Warren dropped the whippet craft into the designated cradle. And as the hypatomics spluttered into silence, the spacefarers prepared to leave their ship.

A great throng was gathered at the rocketdrome. That was understandable, for of all the civilized planeta, Jupiter was least visited by Earth's commercemen, and it was a rare occasion indeed which saw a sleek cruiser of the Space Patrol dropping jets on the faraway world.

That many of the assemblage were bearing arms was also evident to those aboard the Liberty, but Gary Lane found no cause for alarm in this fact. It was only natural that since sughties of the control of the contro

"Nevertheless," said Dr. Kang, "it is written: "The wise man treads the unknown path with drawn sword. It would be well for us to supposed the would be well for us to supposed the coming. Therefore, while you would be sufficient to the supposed the coming. Therefore, while you would shall remain within the ship, watching carefully. At the first sign of hostile movement I shall depress the force-shield button, surrounding you and the Liberty, with an impenetrable field. Good lack, my friends."

"And since," added Dr. Anjers, "it would not look well for the crew to remain aboard, if we are to give an appearance of frankness and amity, I shall go to the engine room and there keep the hypos running for immediate departure . . . if such should be necessary."

Thus it was arranged. And so, a few minutes later, young Dr. Lane headed a company numbering a score which clambered from the *Liberty's* airlock to the surface of the planet Tuniter.

THE space sailors and blasters, grateful for an opportunity to stretch their legs, came happily from the ship. But none, not even the skipper High Warren himself, wore sidearms, so desirous was Gary of proving to the Jovians his good will. With

e calm assurance the venturers moved toward the azure-fleshed assembly awaiting them, taking care, however, not to step beyond that imaginary line which Dr. Kang had said was the limit of the force-shield protection.

Gary raised both arms aloft in the universal token of greeting.

"Peace, men of Jupiter!" he cried.
"We come from Earth in friendship
and goodwill on a mission of vital importance, and we heg an audience with
your leaders."

He could not have dreamed what was to happened too swiftly and too suddenly for any comprehension. The leader of the Jovians, a member (if one could Judge by the elaborateness of his trappings) of the Supreme Council, flung high his ram in a sign which was anything but friendly. His voice rasped forth in strident command.

"It is they! The Earthling traitors who would steal the fruits of our knowledge and destroy our noble cul-

ture. Seize them and hold them fast!"

In that instant the waiting throng coalesced into an angry mob, and as one man surged violently forward to seize their earthly visitors!

THERE was but one thing for Gary Lane to do. He spun toward the ship, shouted, "The force-shield, Dr.

e Kang! Turn it on!"

Then, with a sigh of assurance that is they were safe from their attackers, to the side of the contradity, "Well, we might as well go back to the ship. They don't seem to believe, us. Guess we'll have to talk to them ob y radio until we can make them understand—"

Then the shrill cry of Nora Powell brought his words to an abrupt end.

"The barrier, Gary! It's not working! Look! They're breaking through!"

And Gary whirled again to see. In truth, there was no invisible shield to stay the advance of the onrushing lovians. Already the vanguard of the blue-skinned warriors was rusbing down upon his band, and already the startled Earthmen were preparing to

combat this unexpected threat. They were, or had been, men of the Space Patrol. They had no intention of surrendering meekly to a force of an alien planet, no matter how out-

numbered or outarmed. The voice of Herby Hawkins cried in shrill dismay, "Why, the blue blighters! Wot scum! Let 'em 'ave it.

boys!" And though guns had been forbidden the landing party, other but still formidable weapons appeared miraculously in space-bronzed fists. Sheath

kuuela, an Erosian traal.

In vain, Lane cried swift warning, "No, lads! Don't fight! Let them take us if they must! Go peaceably!" His words came too late. Already a Tovian had fallen beneath the thrust of a slashing blade. Another was gasping out his life in choking coils of the Martian kuugla, while bubbling screams of borror bespoke the whirling

path of the cross-shaped Erosian weapon "The Koople of the Martian outlanders is vaguely similar to the bols of Earth's Polynesian tribesmen, being a length of fine hemp weighted at one extremity with three burked books. When thrown by an export, the Ausgie wraps itself about the body of its victim, the barbs sinking into his flesh while the zone colls itself about his hody, stiffing any movement, . . . The track of the Eros guards is somewhat like the boomerans used by early Australian husbmen, except that it is shared more like a creatika, each blude being haned to a rezor edge. An accomplished "teaciss" (or "traxi-thrower") can decapitate an enemy at

two hundred yards with this weapon . . . and make the troal return to his feet for another casting."-Excerpt from: A Surpey of Tribal Weapons, Stellar Institute Press, 2208 A.D .- Ed.

Then sheer weight of numbers overwhelmed the feeble defense. The Iovians smashed through the battling few, and their stronger weapons took harsh toll of those who had dared oppose them.

Gary saw two Earth mariners go down, Robinson and Mulasky, parched to cinders by the lethal flame of the universally employed needle-gun. He saw Bill Smikes, who had wielded the trual, literally torn to pieces by the vengeful hands of blue-skinned formen. And another fell also: one innocent of any attack. Chief Engineer Sebold, whose only crime had been attempting to hurry his men to safety. A ray gun caught him, burning his less out from under him as if they had been tinder. He topoled and fell forward, his grizzled old space-besten face a mass of knives and leaded knucks, a Martian sbock and incredulity.

With a cry Gary leaped to his side. But there was nothing to be done. The engineer was as good as dead . . . and knew it. He twisted his writhing form to look up. His lips muttered thickly, "The foreign doctor! The filthy, murdering beast! He sold us om# 139

Then a whiteness drained his lips . . . and be was gone.

BUT with his passing ended-for the time being, at least - the slaughter. For now the Jovians had accomplished their end: had completely surrounded the Earth party. and held every member captive save those in the sbip. Nor did they hold their freedom for long. At the Yovian leader's command a corps of warriors rushed the airlock. When they emerged a few minutes later they escorted with no gentleness Kang and Boris Anjers. Aniers' usually cherubic face was mottled with race and scorn. As he was thrust into company with his comrades he pointed a quivering finger at Kang and screamed, "The yellow devil! He never pressed the button! The shield was never activated!"

O'Day, who during the brief affray had made no attempt to fight, but had leaped to the protection of the two girls, now glanced up from the pale golden creature whose slim form his arm still encircled to meet the eyes

of Dr. Kang questioningly.
"Never pressed—But, Dr. Kang,

why not?"

No muscle moved on the aged Martian's features, but his eyes were dark pools of bewilderment. "There is something terrihly wrong, I did depress the button. The force-shield should have worked. I.—I do not understand!"

Then there was time for no more, for the Jovian commander was prodding them into motion, and his voice was unequivocably harsh.

"To the Hall with them, that they may be judged and sentenced for this vile treachery!"

THUS, not as free men freely seeking a gift of equals, but as already half-adjudged and half-condemned captives, were the space venturers transported to the Council Hall of Pangré.

Here sat in Judgment upon them white robed and diademed beings of a race not now to be found on any of the inner planets. The azure-tinted people who, if Dr. Kang's explanation were true, had in eons past spread culture throughout the whole of the solar system.

The judging of the Liberty's equipage was a swift formality, speedily concluded. The Jovian council's handling of the case was a travesty on justice. It listened to the tale told hy its fellow members, crisply abbreviated

Gary Lane's attempt at explanation, and the half score Councillors conferred briefly amongst themselves.

Then one, their leader, turned to address the Earthmen. "It is enough! We have decided. By the powers invested in us. the Supreme Council of

vested in us, the Supreme Council of Ahura-Pangré, we do herehy determine and judge—"
"But," cried Gary Lane, "you

haven't listened to our story . . . haven't heard our reasons for coming here . . "

"That since in violation of every rule and precept of interplanetary law you, a group of criminal felons from a neighbor planet, have made landing

without permission upon our world—"
"We couldn't do otherwise. We had
to come here, learn your secret . . ."

"And did hereupon murderously set upon and slay certain of our citizens..." "Us?" cried Flick Muldoon, "Us

set upon and slayed? Listen, you blue-skinned baboon, we came here as friendly as fleas on a pup's tail. Your boys are the ones who started the fighting!"
"We do therefore." continued the

Jovian Councillor sternly, "hereby condemn and sentence you—"

Gary drew a deep, regretful breath.
Well, here it came. Imprisonment. A
long wrangle of extraditionary rites

... transportation back to Rarth, there to stand trial before a jury of Earthmen ... a dreary, tedious, legalistic process, wasting precious—oh, so precious—time! He wisted rest-lessly under the knowledge that while worlds dillydallied, disaster crept ever nearer. If he could only make these people understand—

Then his petulance died, appalled. For the Councillor was speaking again, and from his lips were falling words that in his wildest imaginings Gary had not dreamed to hear. Words which not only wasted precious time but spelled forever an end to their vital mission. Dreadful words of door "To havely condemn and contents

tal mission. Dreadful words of doom,
"Do hereby condemn and sentence
you," intoned the Chief Councillor
stridently, "to . . . immediate execu-

CHAPTER XI

Flight Through the Fourth

tion!"

AS IN a dream, Gary Lane heard those solemn words fall from the lips of his Jovian judges. Execution Immediate execution! This, then, was to be the end of their adventure; this their recompense for having fought single-handed to stay the doom which threatened the entire system of worlds circling the tiny star called Sol!

With what happened next, the dream became a nightmare. Blue-skinned stalwarts of the Jovian guard closed about him and his companions, prodded them toward a grim, arched opening which Gary intuitively knew must be the nortal of their execution chamber.

He was conscious of Nora Fowell weeping solfy at his side, of Dr. Bryan muttering in mute and babbled protein, of the subtle strengthening of carbitrate tenned himself, despite the overwhelming odds against them, to hurl one last and gallant defi at their murderers. And because there was now no other path, he sought O'Day's eye. ... in that glance grinily suraing ing himself on the corrarie's side for solid choose to lead.

Then, as the entire corps of Earthmen readled themselves to go out fighting rather than as sheep herded to the slaughter, there came a sudden interruption from an unexpected source.

Through an entrance at the rear of

the Council Hall rushed a wildly excited figure, a Jovian bearing in his hand a scrap of paper. This he waved wildly above his head, crying as he hurried forward, "My Lords! My Lords and Councillors—wavi! Stay the execution! A message from the

The Chief Councillor frowned. "It is useless. We will entertain no bids for extradition. It is the law of our homeland these Earthmen have transgressed. They must pay the penalty."

planet Earth!"

gressed. They must pay the penalty."

"But," panted the messenger, "it is
no plea for clemency, but something
else . . . something more important.

All eyes were riveted on the curious tableau. O'Day's whisper grated

softly in Gary's ear.

"OQ, Gary, now's the time. Their

attention is divided. We'll never have a better chance." But Lane grasped his companion's

wrist tightly, bopefully.

"No, Lark, no! Not now. There's

more here than meets the eye. Look
—the Chief Councillor's face—"
And indeed, a sudden and striking
change had overswept the countenance

of the Jovian judge as he scanned the message thrust into his hand by the excited messenger. His brows drew together. He turned to his associates and growled, "But what is this? Have the men of Earth gone mad? "This message says," he read aloud,

"This message says," he read alond, "I'l Liberty and creen, including group of Earth scientists, arrive on your pleants, in the name of all humanity offer them every possible assistance, intestigation proves their theories are absolutely correct. Sun is desimiling rapidly to demost-star stage. Pleanet Mercusy tottering in its course; may plunge into Sun hoursty. Entire solar system hovering on brink of dreadful diseaster."

"Thank Godl"

The grateful cry ripped itself unbidden from Gary Lane's throat. His tightened nerves relaxed in a warmth of justification, and his eyes were

bright with happiness. "Thank God, they've seen the truth at last! Now, if it is only not too

late!" The Jovian councillor turned to him, puzzled.

"Too late, Earthman? Too late for what? What does this mean?"

ND so, at last. Lane was given an opportunity to explain that which he had not been permitted to tell before. He told the true and only reason for their journeying hither, and pointed out the vital importance of the Liberty's mission. The Council heard him through. Be-

fore the earnestness of his eyes, the burning ardor of his voice, their doubts seemed to melt away. Save for one member of the court who grumbled dourly, "This is all very well, and a pretty tale, but to me it has the smell of a prefabricated plot. So you want our cherished secret, eh. Earthman? The secret of achieving speed greater than that of light?" "I not only want it," said Gary

earnestly, "hut must have it. Time is growing perilously short."

"And how do we know that this message is not a trick of your Earth government to save your spying hides? We have no reason to trust Earth."

Lane bit his lip. There it was again, the old, oft-told story of Earth's greed and selfishness now working against the better interests of all the planets. "No, maybe not," he acknowledged, "hut--"

"But-" interrupted Flick Muldoon, always to be depended upon in an emergency for clear and logical reasoning-

"All our talk ain't worth a tinker's dam. The proof lies in the sky above us. Tell your astronomers to turn their 'scopes on Mercury. What's happening there should prove or disprove that radiogram's honesty."

The Chief Councillor nodded judicially.

"The Earthman is right, The truth of falsity of this message is beyond Earth's power to dissemble. We shall see and judge for ourselves. You leaders of the Earth party, come with us, Your crew shall remain here," He addressed his own warriors. "Show them every comfort-but guard them well. For if this message turns out to be a hoax-"

He let his words dwindle into silence, but the silence was pregnant with mean-

Thus it was that the members of the Jovian Supreme Council and the arhiters of the Liberty's course convened presently within Pangré's magnificent observatory. Here, awed, they saw proof of the great and learned culture which was Jupiter's. For not even upon Earth nor sage Mars had ever been erected an edifice so complete and so impressive as this. The size of the reflecting telescope

to which a hurriedly summoned Chief Astronomer led them was one to stagger the imagination. It was greater by half again than the monstrous tube constructed by Kang's people on the desert planet. So huge was it that a 200 inch 'scope, equal in size to the proud but primitive instrument used hy Earthmen at Mount Palomar in the Twentieth Century, was here employed simply as a spotter for the larger telescope.

But that, Gary Lane knew, was as it must be, since Jupiter was so far removed from its primary. And that this instrument sighted by infra-red radiation be also knew. In no other way could its vision pierce the murky pall of cloud banks enswaddling the planet.

A LL these were but vagrant thoughts fickering through his brain as the gigantic tube was brought to bear upon the desired image. And then, as all took seats before a huge reflecting screen upon which the enmitmered vision was projected, he gapped in wonderment to see the heart of their solar system brought so near that it seemed scarce more than a day's iourney.

Gigantic was the sun, its space-filtered radiance a blinding sheen which covered almost half the screen before them. Large, too, and visible plainly to the naked eyes was the gleaming, innermost planet Mercury.

When first Gary looked, Mercury seemed and acted in all ways natural, But then . . .

A cry escaped his lips. Because, contrary to all sound common sense and experience, the giltering orb of Mercury could be actually seen to movel. And that movement was not the steady, normal burtling of a planer in steadfact course about its primary. Mercury was hobbling, weaving, twisting, slabs, ing itself like a gigantic silver terrier tugging to break free of an invisible leash!

For breathless minutes the assemblage watched the staggering spectacle being enacted before them. Then the Jovian Supreme Councillor spoke, his voice sinese in applicat.

Jovian Supreme Councillor spoke, his voice sincere in apology. "Gentlemen of Earth, forgive us. We have wronged you. We did not, could

not, comprehend the magnitude—"
But his words were interrupted by a
hoarse cry bursting simultaneously
from the throats of Jovians and Earthmen alike.
"Look!"

And turning once more to the screen,

all witnessed the dreadful climax . . . the end of the planet Mercury.

For how long a time it had been tugging at its cosmic bonds none knew, but suddenly a critical point of balance was reached. With a great, impulsive leap the tiny planet burst free of its solar gyves. Like a gleaming stone hurled from some gigantic catapult it flashed outward from its orbit, writhing, shimmering, shaking. Then its flight altered. For the space of a longdrawn, tremulous breath it seemed to hang motionless in the void, ungoverned by any gravitational force or power of natural law . . . then the immutable order of nature asserted itself

The laws of Mass-and-Distance asserted their claim. Like a fluttering moth drawn irresistibly to a flame, the fleeing world fell backward into its luminary. Faster and faster it raced. now dropping plummetlike toward the blazing prominences of Sol. As it fell it was squeezed and hammered out of shape by the tremendous forces playing upon it. For a moment it looked like a lengthening sphere . . . then a teardrop . . . then the pear-shape solit into an infinitude of crushed and shapeless fragments which streaked like falling pebbles into the beckoning heart of Sol

For the briefest instant a faintly brighter flame seemed to flicker upon Sol's surface as the parent sun hungrily swallowed its infant. Then . . . that was all.

MULDOON turned a way, shuddering. He said in a dull, dazed voice, "There—there were men on that planet. Posts, mines, laboratories . . ."
"Johnny Cosgrave," said Hugh War-

ren. "He would have finished his

month. He was going back to Earth to

get married."

Gary said tightly, "What happened to Mercury will happen to all the planets if we are not successful. That or something equally horrible. As the

sun dwindles, its weight per volume will increase; all the inner planets will

be devoured as was Mercury.

"You—" He turned to the Jovian
Councillor—"Your planet may not suf-

fer that fate. You are too far away. But the sun's heat will fail, and when that happens cold will sweep down upon you . . . such devastating cold as cannot be imagined. If your orbit widens, you may whirl away from the

sun and be lost in the never-ending depths of space."

depths of space."

The Councillor said gravely, "You need say no more, Earthman, I under-

stand perfectly. We of Jupiter arsometimes hasty, but never fools. Say now, what do you need of us? How can we cooperate with you to stay

this impending doom?"
"Speed," said Lane. "The knowl-

edge of that which your race alone knows: the secret of achieving speed faster than that of light."

The Jovian nodded gravely, "You shall have it. The requisite apparatus shall be installed in your spaceship immediately. But you must help us. Tell us your destination, that we may calculate the coordinates, and bring you to

your objective,"
"We must go," said Gary, "to the
gulaxy of the star known as Sirius."

"Sirius! Outside our solar system?" The Councillor frowned, "That is difficult and perilous. There are dangers even to our method."

"We must risk them. As it is, we have no way of telling if we are going to the proper place. Nor, indeed, whether when we get there we will find ways to do that which we must. "Tell me, what is the limiting velocity of this new method you have devised? How fast will we be able

the to travel?"

The Jovian smiled faintly. "Upon
the that score, Earthman, you need have

no apprehension. You will reach your destination in plenty of time—if you reach there at all. Because, you see, there is no limiting velocity to our method."

"No limiting—?"
"None at all. Your translation

from one spot to another will be practically instantaneous."
"Instantaneous!" cried Dr. Anjers.

"But that is impossible. Only by warping space itself could an object be transferred instantaneously from one

spot to another!"

"And that," acknowledged the Jovalan, "is identically the principle upon which our secret is based. Our instruments do not enable an object to more at a speed greater than that of the limiting velocity of light. Such a thing is, by definition and natural law, quite impossible. No, the principle we employ is utterly different. The object itself does not move at all. It

merely stands still ... for a brief time cast into a state of infinite entropy ..."
"And them—?" asked Dr. Bryant.
"Space warps itself about the object, unfolding to place it in an entirely new sector. Thus, von see, our speed-

heightening device does not depend upon velocity at all, but on the unchangeable mechanics of Space and Time. It is, in brief, a method of flight through the Fourth Dimension!"

CHAPTER XII Betraved

THE worst enemies make the staunchest allies. That old truism never proved itself more surely than to Gary Lane and his comrades in the ensuing days. Those same Jovians who, considering them enemies, had been swift to condemn them to death with but a travesty of trial now, allied to their cause, proved themselves most eager of aides.

W hile technicians hastened to equip the Liberty with that secret device which would enable the ship to project itself through quadri-dimensional space to the ulterior universe, other craftsmen labored diligently to refurbish the ship, check its armaments, and render it in all ways completely shinokane for the iourney to

follow

Nor made the Jovanas any effort to conceal that which was being done aboard the Liberty. They worked openly, their engineers offering palnataking explanations of the device's operation to those who cared to learn. And, of course this number was great. Almost all the Liberty's personnel was cager to learn the secret of that novel growth their ship. As the sublime simplicity of the plan revealed itself physicists and spacemen alike were provided to the control of the c

awed.
"Not so much," said Captain Hugh
Warren wonderingly, "at the method
itself as at the fact that nobody ever
thought of it before. Why, when you
hear it explained it's like child's play!"

Dr. Bryant smiled thinly. "And is that not always true of great inventions? The wheel, the steam engine, the gasoline motor, the rocket driveommonplaces to the civilizations which used them. But each was, to a former civilization which knew it not, a mystery at one profound and obscure. So it is with the Jovian fourth-dimensional drive.

"I venture to predict that in the future days—if, that is, we successfully accomplish our mission—it will become the standard method of space travel. Its advantages are obvious. Instantaneous transfer of objects from one spot to another . . . why, just think! Tomorrow's earthman may eat for breakfast fresh budberries plucked that merning from the support of the control of the control of the stapped short hours ago from a Martian dairy ranch!

"All of which," said the little steward, Herby Hawkins apologetically, "sounds mighty good, guv nor. And maybe this here now device is, like you say, child's play. But—beggin' your pardon, sir—I still don't get it. Ow can a ship get so fast from one plyce to another? Almost like it was in two plwes at the same time?"

"Why," explained Dr. Bryant professorially, "simply by contracting into contigual adjacency two loci of the continuum—"

"EXCUSE me a minute, Doctor," by gined clay, "Maybe I can esplain it in a very Hawkins will understand more easily. You see, Hawkin, it's like clais. I draw two circles on this
piece of paper—"He sketched rapidly
—"Now, let us suppose you are a twodimensional creature living in this
verse, which we will call "Faltands" to
travel to that one. How would you go
about hi?"

"Naturally," said Hawkins, "this way." And he drew his finger laterally between the two "worlds." "A stryte line bein' the shortest distance between two points—"

"Of course," said Gary. "And being a Flatlander you would have neither knowledge nor comprehension of any swifter way of making a journey than to traverse the broad width of the sheet, However, three-dimensional creatures like ourselves can immediately see a still shorter and easier way of traveling from one sphere to the other. We would simply-" He picked up the sheet of paper and folded it so the two worlds lay adjacent - "We would simply create a two-di-

third dimension." "Well, blimey!" said Hawkins, "To complete the analogy," Gary went on, "that is what the Jovians

have done . . . only working in four dimensions rather than three "Everyone knows magnetic matter warps space. Einstein proved that 'way back in the early days of the Twentieth Century. So the scientists of Jupiter have invented a machine which, setting up a highly magnetized flux field. warps three-dimensional space in the

direction of the flight they wish to make. Their 'ends of the paper' fold together . . . and when the warping machine is again disengaged you are where you want to be. It's as easy as that."

"It's as easy as that-" Hawkins gulped and ran a finger under his uniform collar. "Yes, sir. Now that you point it out, it's all very clear, sir, Ridic'lously simple, if I might say so, So, completely comprehendin' the sitchyation. I'll be gettin' back to my work now, sir . . . if you don't mind." And he disappeared.

BUT if Gary Lane found it easy to explain the operation of the Iovian space warp, he found it not quite so easy to explain other facets of the blue-skinned race's psychology.

It was baffling, for instance, to find himself confronted with smiles when, fearful of mishap, he warned the Iovian technicians against tampering with Earth's lealously guarded hypatomic unit

"You must be very careful. The hypos are protected with devices which will cause them to explode if tampered with "

The chief technician smiled pleas-

"Yes," he said, "they were, weren't mensional space warp through the they?" "I'm sorry," apologized Gary, "but

there's nothing I can do about it. What! Were? I don't understand.

Do you mean---?" "We've drawn the dragon's teeth.

Yes, of course. We had to in order to install our own equipment."

"But bow-?" "Another useful trick," smiled the

Iovian, "of fourth dimensional science, It was a simple matter to reach our instruments into sealed chambers and cut the wires connecting the explosive fuses." That, young Dr. Lane could see

clearly, was quite true. It would be no harder for mechanics working with quadri-dimensional tools to perform this observation than for a tri-dimensional bank robber to remove the contents of a Flatland safe.

But there was a corollary to this revelation. Gary said slowly, "Then . . . then that means you now understand the operation of the hypatomic

motor." The other nodded casually, "Why, ves. And most ingenious, too,"

"What do you plan to do with your knowledge?"

"Why," said the Jovian frankly, "I think it would be a very good idea to expose it openly to the races of every solar planet. Earth has held its monopoly on spaceflight long enough. I think, don't you, it's almost time all the worlds were given the right to free and competitive commerce?"

Gary grinned, a warm admiration for this people suffusing him. And: "I think," he agreed, "you are abso-

lutely right." ALL these were interludes. There

were others, too: amusing, entertaining, beguiling, Because now, on the eve of what must assuredly be their last and most perilous journey, almost to a last man the argonauts of the Liberty were having a last fling at such

pleasures as presented themselves. And in truth, there was much to be done, many beauties to be seen on Jupiter.

For the entertainment of the Earthmen was planned an expedition to the Flaming Sea, that weird chemical phenomenon of cold light whose shimmering, ruddy reflection, viewed by Earth's telescopes centuries ago through the filtering layers of Juniter's foggy sbroud, bad caused Earth scientists to ponder on the nature of the "Red Spot."

On this trip almost all the Liberty's personnel embarked, gay and carefree as voungsters gone a-picnicking. Lark O'Day, arm linked through that of his now-constant companion, the shy and quiet Pen-N'hi, came bridgeward to

urge Gary on the trip. "Oh, come along, Lane!" be coaxed. "Come along and have some fun.

man can't work all the time." Gary said with sincere regret, "I'm sorry, Lark, but I can't. I have to help the engineers complete their installation. And there are some final computations to be made yet-"

Nora Powell, who had been standing in the background pleaded almost wistfully, "But it would be so much fun, Gary. They say the Flaming Sea is one of the most beautiful sights in the galaxv. One of the seven wonders of the universe."

"I know it. But I'm up to my ears-"

The girl said almost hopefully, it seemed, "Then, maybe I'd better stay with you? Perhaps I can be of some

assistance?" But Gary shook his head. "No, you run along. Hugh, you look out for

Nora. See that she has a good time," Warren, grinning broadly, moved forward to link his arm in that of the girl. "Sure will, pal. The pleasure's all mine."

So, in the end, all the adventurers save two took the sightseeing trip. Those two were Gary Lane and the elderly Eurasian scientist, Dr. Aniers, who had courteously excused himself. "When one reaches my age, my friends, one loses interest in romantic surroundings. No, I shall remain here to be of what assistance I can to Dr. Lane.

And of assistance he was. For it was he whose adroit questioning of the Jovian engineers finally brought clarity to a question whose answer had been often hinted but never answered. As the workmen put the finishing touches on the warning unit's installation he asked, "And just what, gentlemen, are the limitations of this device

. . . the usage to which it may not safely be put? Your Councillor. Kushra, gave us to understand that there was a certain amount of peril inherent to its use."

THE chief technician frowned. "That is right. However, we have taken all safety factors into consideration. In reaching your destination, if the dials and verniers are not changed from the settings which we have established, you will not experience the slightest difficulty-"

"But just what," asked Gary "is the nature of this danger?"



"Simply that through an improper setting of the dials you might end your journey in some place quite unlike that which was your destination. In other words, if this central vernier were twisted to the right by so much as one degree the Liberty's flight might end not, as intended, within the solar galaxy of the star Sirlus . . . but within the burning heart of the star itself."

Gary frowned uneasily. "The only consolation to that thought is that if such a thing happened none of us would ever know anything about it."
"Oute two The Liberty and all

would ever know anything about it."
"Quite true. The Liberty and all a board would be instantaneously seared to a clinker by the inconceiv-

able heat of a star thousands of times greater than our little sun."
"Why, then," asked Dr. Anjers, "employ control verniers at all? Why

not simply set and lock the controls upon the desired objective?"

The Iovian smiled. "Have you for-

gotten, sir, that when your mission is ended you will wish to return bome? Then the new course and trajectory must be calculated and the verniers reset. That is why it is necessary we install a complete unit and train you in its use." The scientist said petulantly, "Despite all these precautions it is a fool-hardy trip. It would be safer, to my way of thinking, to visit a nearer star . . . say Proxim a Centauri . . . thereby diminishing the risk of over or undershooting our mark,

"Sometimes," be bridled, "I think this whole scheme is madness. It is ridiculous to think of us, tiny mites that we are, daring to attack the people of a universe so infinitely greater than ours that we will be as dust motes beneath their crushing heels!"

Gary stared at the little man curiously. "People greater than us, Dr. Anjers? Now, that's a peculiar thought.

Whatever makes you say—"

Anjers wriggled in sudden defant embarrassment. "It was not my idea, Dr. Lane, but your own. It was you who advanced the theory that our unserse is dwindling. It follows as a nat-

ural corollary that any race existing outside our universe..." Gary nodded. "Wby, yes, I suppose you're right. But I'd never stopped to think of it in quite that way. A race

of giants—"

But the little man's words had had
an even more striking effect upon the



when giants warred.

"Such myths are easily explained. They are simply barbaric naturemyths: explanations of the recurring

solstice, the battle between the giants of summer heat and winter cold." But the Jovian said somewhat haughtily, "Ours is no folk tale of a barbaric neonle. Doctor. Our race was old when yours still roamed the jungles

of its native world. Our written history is based on fact, not fancy. And it is strange that you should speak now of a race of giants. . . ." Gary Lane held his peace. Yet, he,

too, was oddly troubled by this new and disturbing thought.

RUT all things end at last, even hours of impatient waiting. And it was shortly thereafter that the installation of the lovian machine was completed. So, at last, their adventure appropriately feasted, their success prayerfully toasted the Liberty's complement prepared to set forth on the final leg of their journey.

All hands were aboard, all stations manned, and in the control turret stood those upon whose efforts depended not only the success of this mis-

sion but the very existence of the uni-It was a great moment, one calculated to not only lift with pride the heart of the humblest person, but to instill humility into the heart of the most prideful. A strange silence fell over the little group, a silence finally

broken by Hugh Warren. "Well . . . all ready, Gary?"

Gary nodded, "Yes, You understand the operation of the Iovian machinery?"

"Yes, I press this first button . . . the green one . . . allow fifteen minntes for the motors to warm and the space warp to develop, then press the red button. Right?"

"Right," said Gary. He looked around at his friends, then bent his head in a swift, decisive nod. "Here we go, folks. High, low, jack and game!"

Warren's finger touched the green button.

Nothing happened.

That is, nothing secmed to happen. The Liberty's hypos were cut. There sounded through the ship not even that dim, familiar, whining undertone which was its usual accompaniment of generating speed. There was no sensation of flight, no burtling shock of acceleration, no grip of suddenly intensified gravity. No intraspatial weightlessness. Nothing.

For a moment the wayfarers stared at each other with speculative eyes. Could it be the Jovian invention was, after all, a failure. Did they still lie in their cradle on Pangré spaceport,

As if to solve this question, Lark O'Day pressed the stud which opened the vision plate to the outer hull. And what appeared thereon finally dissolved all doubts. It was not what they saw but what they did not see which offered clinching evidence of the fourth dimensional drive's effectiveness

Because it was no spaceport over which they looked, nor jet space spangled with the colorful burning of a myrjad stars. Instead there reflected on the vision plate before them a blank, grav, writhing nothingness. Just that, The soul of an emptiness beyond space and time, beyond color and form and life.

It was a vista terrible to look upon, awful to consider. Gary Lane drew a short uneven breath. "Well, take a good look, folks," he said. There it is. The world between the worlds. The universe between the universes. The unfathomable fourth dimension!

Then, amazingly, came a burst of giggling laughter from one of their party. From the mirth-contorted lips of their Eurasian scientist companion, Dr. Bo-

ris Anjers. "Yes," babbled Aniers trumphantly,

"look long and well, little fools, while vet you may. For when that mist passes your puny efforts will end in flaming oblivion. That all too brief gray pall is-your shroud of death!"

CHAPTER XIII

The War Between the Worlds

"ARY LANE'S immediate reaction to these incredible words was a swift and regretful commiseration. The little man plainly did not know what he was saving. The rigors of the long and arduous trip had undermined his nerve. Now this final, most perilous adventure had completely disrupted his

morale. Lane said soothingly. "Easy, Doctor, It's not so had as all that. It'll be all over in a few minutes. Here, sit down and rest-"

And he moved a few paces toward the rotund little savant. But Anjers, moving even more swiftly, evaded him, He darted back, a hand dipping into one capacious pocket of his facket, and when that hand emerged it gripped the hilt of an ugly Haemholtz ray pistol. With this Aniers covered his stunned

companions. "Stand back, Lane! Another step and I'll-Aaah, that's better." There was no cherubic placidity on his features now. Nothing hut pure, unadultcrated malevolence, "No. my friends, I am not, as you think, unnerved or mad. I am in complete possession of my senses . . . and have been all along. Too much so to permit that you outcasts of Gog shall ever achieve

your purpose-" "Boris!" cried Dr. Bryant. "Whatever is the matter? Calm down man.

for God's sake!" "Gog?" spluttered Flick Muldoon.

"What's he mean, Gog?"

And Gary Lane, remembering it was wise to humor the deranged, said in as calm a voice as he could muster, "Now, Dr. Aniers please! Be calm. Rest a while." "Rest?" Aniers' voice broke almost

hysterically. "Yes . . . rest. That is good. When the red button is pressed. we will all rest, eternally."

"What do you mean?" demanded Lark O'Day harshly.

"I mean it was an evil day for you, pirate, when you cast your lot with these too-ambitious thwarters of destiny. For this journey is, and has heen since its heginning, doomed to failure. I, the Kraedar Borisu, Praeconsul of Magog, have seen to that!"

"Now it's Magog!" cried Muldoon. A minute ago it was Gog. What's all this double talk-Gog and Magog?" Gog and Magog! The two names

struck a familiar spark in Gary Lane's brain. The ancient legend of Earth about which they had been talking only the other day. A folk tale of an elder age when giants walked the earth and strove mightily amongst themselves. The dim beginnings of a horrible

conception stirred within him, and he repeated the words. "Gog and Magog. Not two mythical persons, but two worlds. Two ancient worlds embattled."

ANJERS' half-mad laughter rang shrill in the tense control turret. "You surpass yourself. Dr. Lane. Sometimes your swift intuition amazes me. Yes, you have guessed the truth. A truth forgotten by man for countless centuries. There are two worlds

-two worlds which one time warred. The name of one is Magor. That is the planet whereon I was born, from which I came to Earth. The name of the other was Gog. It was the solar globe which one time circled your sun between Mars and Jupiter. Long ages ago our two great empires strove in bitter conflict. Long ages ago your time, that is. In the Greater Universe -the true universe-of which Magog is still a dominant part, time has passed more slowly. To our people it has been but a score of years since our great weapons crumbled Gog to destruction and hurled your entire solar system into the doom which now ap-

proaches its climax." Nora Powell cried, "Then Gary's theory was right! The cosmic rays are a deliberate force being played

upon our solar system to destroy it. And you-you-"

"I am one of a race pledged to the utter obliteration of your people," snarled Aniers, "Yes, Had you not been blind and trusting fools you should have realized this long since I did my utmost to prevent this expedition. And even though through fortunate follies on your part my efforts came to naught, now at the end triumph shall be mine!"

Gary said dazedly, "Then-then the marauder in the laboratory, that was you! And the informer whose distorted revelations caused the World

Council to reject our pleas-" -"And it was you," challenged Muldoon, "who stumbled and fell at the Space Patrol port, almost ruining our escape? You, too, who suggested we turn back when Venus refused us near-

rairabe-" "And it was also you," said Dr. Kang gravely, "who from the engine room tampered with the controls of the force shield on Juniter, imperiling all

our lives? You who insisted we should set our course toward Proxima Centauri rather than Sirius..."

Boris Aniers, or "Borisu", as he now designated himself, bowed mockingly. But his grip was still firm upon the butt of the Haemholtz pistol, and his eyes carefully guarded against sudden movement by his erstwhile com-

"Yes, my friends," he taunted. "It was I who did these things. Your belated recognition of my exploits is amusing . . . but not significant For it was also I who, a short while ago, reset the verniers of the Jovian quadridimensional drive. In a few short moments I shall press the red key which unfolds the space warp. When that happens, success will finally crown my efforts. For in this room are gathered

the half dozen Earthmen causable of

staying your solar system's destruction. With your passing dies the last hope of saving your universe." O'Day's eyes were narrowed slits. He rasped dryly, "Haven't you forgotten something else, Dr. Anjers. You are one of our party. When that red stud is depressed you will share our

fate," The Magogean traitor asked proudly, "Do you think, scavenger of the spaceways, that consideration would in any way alter my act? When I was assigned to espionage service in your universe. I knew and accepted the perils of my post. The death of one Magogean is a small price to pay for the complete and final destruction of

your hated empire. And now-" A SMILE of fanatic triumph touched his lips as he moved toward the banked study. But Gary staring beyoud him, had been watching with a glimmer of hope the frantic gesturings of Captain Hugh Warren. While the

Magogean spy boasted, Warren had been inching toward the Liberty's intercommunicating audio system. He was now but a few feet from the dipragm over which his voice could be borne to every nook and cranny of the ship. His eyes pled desperately with Gary to stall the small Magogean a while longer.

Gary answered with no sign but with action. He cried, "But Dr. Anjers..."
"The name, my foolish young Quixote, is not 'Anjers' but 'Borisu'. The
second name I adopted to comply with
your silly Earth tradition of two names
for a single entity. It is an amusing
joke. In our tongue the word 'anjers'

means 'the fox'."
"Fox," growled Lark O'Day, "spelled

"But tell me, Borisu," persisted Gary, "if we are to die, there can be no harm in our knowing now . . . why do your people bear stuch fierce hatred for those of our universe?"

Borisu glowered darkly. "That is a story too long to tell in its entirety. But a portion I will tell you that you may die realizing the implacable en-

mity of all Magogeans.

"It is a story which goes back many years—as we measure time in the true universe. Many millenia of your brief solar time.

"In true space once existed side by side two universes. That of our mother sun, which you call Sirius, and that of your parent star—Sol. Life spawned on the planets of these two systems; human life evolved. Men similar to you and me grew in stature and wis-

dom, developed civilizations, cultures.

"All this was long ago. For ages untold each planet lived in ignorance of its neighbors. But some two hundred years ago—I measure chronology now in Universal Constant time, which is the only true measurement—that

race of azure-tinted humans who peopled Sol's fifth planet..."
"The predecessors of the Jovians?"

"Yes, hey. The Gogenns thy called themselves, for the name of their word was Gog. Their science discovered, as has recently your Earthy science rediscovered, space travel. Their employment of this knowledge was a parallel to your own. They wettured, cuplored, expanded. They colonized, transporting their people to the other worlds of your nam. They set up outposts, carrying their superior culture was their rule, so all-embracing their left of their particular control of their culture was their rule, so all-embracing their lordship, that all the other planes' creatures between deal sieves, shuttling.

them back and forth between the worlds as they had need of them."

DR. KANG interrupted, "Then my theory was right, at least in part? Space travel is responsible for the commissing of planetary types."

"Yes," nodded Borisu. "And had the Gogeans gone no farther than this, their worlds might still exist. Their people might still be a great people instead of the decadent sprinkling we met on Jupiter.

"But they were not content with draining the wealth of one solar system. No, they must venture afar. So Gogean space-vessels, a mighty armada of them, came to our neighboring sys-

tem, there by weight of superior science wreaked havoc on our cities, slew our brave warriors and set themselves up as rulers not only of their system but of our own.

"But their tyranny was sbort-lived.

"But their tyranny was short-lived. Though our race had not solved the secret of spaceflight, still our scientists possessed a vast knowledge. They turned to the construction of a weapon which should overthrow the interlopers. You know the result, because you have experienced it. Our scientists discovered an all-penetrating ray with the power of contracting the molecules of anything upon which it was turned. In brief, a 'dwindling' ray which proiects what you Earthmen call gamma or cosmic rays.

"The hour for revolt was struck. Long was the warfare, and bloody. But ultimately our people were triumphant. And in judicial council, when victory had been won, it was decided that never again would Gog be granted an opportunity to threaten cosmic peace with its lust for power. And since the only way to cure a disease is by ruthlessly crushing out its roots, a gigantic cosmic ray gun was

built. This was turned upon Gog-"

"And Gog," Dr. Bryant took up the tale, from the depths of his scientific wisdom supplying the details as accurately as if he had been eve witness, "dwindling, crumbled into ruins beneath the cannon's radiation, But your vengeance did not stop there. You continued to play the gun upon the whole of Sol's system. Now, not only one world but an entire universe had been contracted well-nigh to the breaking point. Shortly our parent star itself will become too densely

packed to supply light, and then-" "Then," proclaimed Borisu stridently, "our planet, called 'Magog' because it is 'the enemy of Gog', will reign triumphant throughout not only ours but through every universe."

Gary risked a swift glance at Warren. The skipper had not been idle-Moving a hair's breadth at a time he had finally gained the wall. Now a single motion of his hand would snap

open the switch. "But, Borisu," demanded Gary, "Are not your people satisfied? You have destroyed your real enemy. Must you take vengeance on the children of

the other planers which never harmed you? On the descendants thousands of years removed of those with whom you once struggled?"

"That," said Borisu, "does not matter. Our vengeance will not be com-

plete until the last despised Solarian is destroyed. Only then-Stop! I warned you-"

IIS ray pistol, whirling to bear upon Warren, spat viciously. Its flame cracked across the turret to blast at the snot where Hugh but a moment before had stood. But its lethal . tongue barely licked Warren's uniform. With a blinding movement the captain had smashed open the audio key, hawled. Engine room! Hypos on, quickly!

Then no more, for a second flare of the pistol dropped him, choking, to the floor. Its searing blast kindled the serge of his uniform. Nora Powell screamed and impetuously lunged forward to heat at the hurning cloth with bare hands, A familiar thin, high, whining shuddered through the ship. and from the engine room below came the voice of Bud Howard demanding, "Why, Skipper? I thought you told us not to-

Then the Magogean Kracdar wheeled, his face livid, "Enough," he rasped. "It will do you no good. Miss Powell, to extinguish that little burning. In a moment it and you and all of us will merge in a mightier flame

. . . Magog's blazing star!" He laughed madly as his fist smashed down upon the crimson stud!

CHAPTER XIV

Escape

A S BORISU'S hand depressed the fateful button, a sort of sick paralysis seemed to fall upon almost everyrone in the control turret. It was as a though all realized that a moment hence in one hirel, blinding flame would a vanish all for which a lifetime of strugingle had been spent. Joy and sorrow, happiness and care . . hope, love, amhition . . all these were to merge as one in the final crasing of life's futile slate.

Even Borisu, high-minded a patriot as he proclaimed himself to be, stood stricken by the irrevocable enormity of what he had done. Mad laughter froze on his lips, panic glazed his eyes, and the hand which held the the threatening Haemholtz faltered and dropped

to his side.

And in that moment Warren roared,
"Now. Gary! Get him!"

Gary dove across the room, his shoulders crashing the little man to the floor as his hands wrenched and tore the ray

as his name wentered and tore the ray pistol from Borisu's grasp.

And the sudden death they had heen led to expect?

Nothing happened.

No blinding flame engulfed them.

No cascade of heat crushed the *Liberty*to a blob of molten metal. The gallant
ship rode mightily, smoothly, evenly,
the hum of its hynatomics a reassuring

sound in their ears.

And now the tubbes were turned, for Muldoon and O'Day had leaped to Lane's assistance. Already Flick had enacthed the skittering pistol from the floor, while Lark's strong arms encircled the raging Magogean, locking him in a vise. Meanwhile Warren, Jurching to his feet, had charged to the controls, glanced swiftly at the vision plate, made a few swift corrections in their made a few swift corrections in their

course. Now he turned, grinning.

"Made it," he cried relievedly. "I figured we might. Just in time, though. There's Sirius off the port how. Too close for comfort."

"B-hut," faltered Nora. "What did you do, Hugh? I thought we were headed for certain death? Even the Jovians warned us that if the controls were tampered with—"

were tamperen was, "That's right," admitted Warren cheerfuly. "But the Jovians were thinking only of their own drive. They didn't take all the factors into considerable their constant of the constant of the constant of the constant of the most of their constant of the constant of the most of their constant of the constant of the constant of their constant of their constant of the constant of their constan

been our only means of propulsion.

"But it occurred to me that if we could get the hypos working, adding the Liberty's normal acceleration to the space-twisting speed of the Jovian drive, we might put enough distance between ourselves and Sirius to save our necks.

"And—" He shrugged—"it worked. That's all."

"Hugh," said Gary, "you're terrific."
"Me? No, just plain lucky. I was
only playing a hunch. But I figured

we had everything to gain and nothing to lose."
"He's a violet," snorted O'Day. "A modest, shrinking violet. Stop playing coy, skipper. That was one of the neatest hits of mental astrogation I've ever

seen."
Warren said uncomfortably, "Comets to you, sailor. You could have done the

same thing yourself."
"Sure. If I'd thought of it."
"Anvone who can handle a space-

"In," acknowledged Lark O'Day,
"my own back_yard; our own little

solar system. But when it comes to figuring intergalactic calculus with a quadridimensional drive as a factor— He shook his head admiringly— "you're the boy for my money."

/ULDOON'S fingers were itching MULDOON'S makes He glanced at the silent Borisu, then longingly at his weapon.

"When the Mutual Admiration Society adjourns," he said, "what are we going to do with our lethal little pal? You want I should take him out somewhere and play punchboard on him

with this?"

Gary Lane said grimly, "Murder in cold blood isn't ordinarily my dish. but it seems to me that in this case it isn't so much a case of murder as it is

fitting retribution. I'm in favor of-" But Dr. Bryant said, "No. Gary, We can't do that."

"Why not? He's got it coming to him."

"I agree with you perfectly. But now that we have reached Sirius we

may have need of him." "Need of him?" exploded Muldoon.

"Ves For one thing we already know the Magogean language is unlike any used in our universe. We will have need of an interpreter. Another thing you must remember is that so long as we hold him unharmed aboard the Liberty we hold as hostage one whom we know to be a person of importance among his own people."

Lark O'Day said bluntly, "I'm agin it. I was raised in a hard school, ! know. But one thing I learned long ago was that the best way to get rid

of an enemy is-get rid of him!" And Dr. Kang, too, added quietly, "It is not wise to spare an enemy like this; one who has already attempted not once but many times to destroy us. It is written, 'Who dallies with the wasp will feel its sting,"

Neither Muldoon nor Gary appeared to think highly of Dr. Bryant's clemency. But surprisingly it was the skipper who came to Dr. Bryant's sup-

Warren said soberly, "What you say about Aniers'-Borisu's-treachery is quite true. Nevertheless, we have no right to pass judgment upon him. The thing to do is hold him in protective custody take him back to Earth with us when we go, and there let him stand judgment before a properly constituted court. Law and order must be upheld."

O'Day laughed curtly. "There speaks the Space Patrolman. Once a cop, always a cop, eh, Warren?"

Warren flushed. "Maybe so. But that's the way I feel about it." And the one-time pirate shrugged,

"Okay, skipper. It's your ship. Save him it is. But-" He glared distastefully at the Magogean-"it's a good thing for you, buster, that we're aboard the Liberty and not the Black Star ..."

SO BORISU was taken away and placed under lock and key in the Liberty's brig. And later the leaders of the expedition gathered once more in the control turnet of the Liberty as Hugh Warren, with his instruments, struggled to set a true and proper course for the ship. "It's baffling," he confessed ruefully

after futile consultation with his azimuth chart and astrogation table. "I can't seem to orient myself at all. There are no constant bodies to set a course by. Or, rather, there are plenty of known bodies-but they don't look right. Nothing looks right!"

"What do you mean?" Everything's "Why, just that. cockeyed. Out of proportion. Here, see for yourself-"

Warren touched the stud which activated the vision plate. On the forelens screen was enmirrored that segment of space which lay before the Liberty

As one, the company's eyes opened

wide at the curious picture which lay expected to their views. Starstreem heaves sprawled before them, yest, but from Earth or any of Earth's sites planets. There, stars were din, small speck, fairly agilter in unfathous able distance. Stars had diversity of stars and the star of the star of the star stars. Here a portion of the sky was filled with their tind sprinkling; a clarent or star of the star of the star of the sky was filled with their tind sprinkling; a clerethere might be a patch of spanseelection of the sky was filled with their tinds sprinkling; a clerethere might be a patch of spanselection of the sky was filled with their based spansels.

But not so was space as seen from this vantage point. For, viewing their surroundings through the vision plate, it seemed as if they swam through a sea of radiant light where every star was a beacon, each planet a steadiest buoy of glowing color. And in this gleaming pattern was a regulantity, an orthodoxy as painstaking as if some master craftsman had allocated each glowing sphere with precise care.

Regularly discernible against the omitpresent back-drop of space were the solar galaxies, each a complete entity, also, removed from its fellows and confined to its own definite segment of space. Some galaxies were younger than others. One formed a whirpoon nebula. Another, giving birth to worlds, was a gleaning, eggshaped blob of gold. Still elder universes had achieved secure and permawert believe.

But in certain things they were all alike. Each dominated its own sector of space without encroachment on a neighbor. And each parent star was very nearly equal in size to every other.

It was, in short, the mathematician's dream: the perfect achievement of theoretical stellar mechanics. A universe balanced in absolute statis, with each galaxy arranged in contra-

puntal adjacence to each other.

"But this—" said Flick Muldoon
wildly—"this can't he the Sirian system! This isn't any part of the uni-

verse we knew!"

Young Dr. Lame nodded soberly, "Ves, Frick, its. This, at last, is the true universe. The real and constant universe we theorized might extra when first we took those photographs on Luna. We are looking, as no man bas looked for countless years, upon the true 'bubble universe' of which our solar system was once a part.

"But-" asked Nora-"our solar system now?"

m system no

Warren had been twisting the vision lens. Now he halted its periscopic movement at a space sector behind the Liberty. "I think," he said dubiously, "that may be the universe from which we came. Gary—?"

GARY looked and nodded. Sharp against the dazeling brilliance of the true universe was a strange blot, a circular well, a concesshaped funnel of blackness carven through the bright surroundings. And deep and far, are where the end of this funnel faded into unfathomable distances, was a single, tiny, pin-prick of light glimmering faintly.

"Yes," he said, "that is—must be it. That tiny star is Sol. The one diminishing unit in all the constant universe. And that funnel is the path of the cosmic rays, the cone through which Magog's ultra-wave cannon is beaming its lethal radiation upon our little system."

"Gad!" gritted Lark O'Day, "What a vengeance! What a punishment to mete on an innocent people! We must stop those scoundrels, Gary! If we only knew where to find them—" "We do," Gary pointed out. "As Earth is the far end of the funnel, the planet from which the rays cmanate

must be Magog," "Right as rain," declared Hugh Warren, "And, Garv, I've got it sported now. It's that second planet over there, the blue one. Hello, below

there! Bud!" he shouted into the audio. "Accelerate the hypos to max. And tell the men to stand by for any emergency. We're approaching our

destination." "A.X. to max it is, sir!" came back

the reply. And the whining sound of the hypatomic motors heightened as the Libcrtv, its goal in sight, leaped through unworldly space like a bow-sped silver

arrow IT WAS as they neared Magog that Gary Lane experienced a final qualm of misgiving. Dim memory stirred him. He recalled a remark the

man they had known as Dr. Angers had made on Jupiter. "It is ridiculous to think of us, tiny

mites that we are, daring to attack the people of a universe so infinitely greater than ours that we will be as dust motes beneath their crushing heels." Boriso had said.

At that time he had still been pretending allegiance with his companions. Which did not alter the fact that there might be truth to his claim. The Earthmen, born of a contracted planet, might be a hundred, a thousand times smaller than the enemy whose homeland they were approaching. Appraising the size of Magog from this distance, Gary could not tell. Size is relative, and in this Great Outer Universe there was no commensurable

object by which the spacefarers might But Dr. Kang disabused him of this thought the moment Gary ventured it. 'No, no my friend. You need en-

judge their own stature.

tertain no fears on that account. Just as the Magogean, Borisu was similar in size to us on Earth, so on Magor will our height correspond to that of

the natives." "But if we come from a planet which has been dwindling (or untold

years--"

"That does not matter, my boy, You forget, we are now in the real or 'static' universe. Moreover we came

here through a space warp, traveling with a speed which exceeds that of light. Elementary astrophysics will tell you that any object exceeding the speed of light attains infinite mass. Therefore we may safely assume that during our period of translation from the inner to the outer universe the Liberty and all of us aboard the ship expanded to a size comparable to this universe which now surrounds us."

"Expanded?" grunted Lark O'Day "But I don't feel any different." "Naturally not. For you are as per-

fectly attuned to this greater universe as you were formerly to our own contracted solar system."

"But." demurred Gary, "Aniers-I mean Borisu-himself said-"

Dr. Kang smiled quietly, "Barisu made several paradoxical remarks. He also showed an appalling lack of comprehension of the hypotomic drive. Moreover, on several occasions he failed rather pitifully to accomplish a mission he had every opportunity of achieving.

"All of which leads me to believe, my friend, that his boasting to the contrary -- he's not so billiant a genius as he believes himself. Nor is his race so scientifically advanced as he considers it. In at least several respects we have already discovered their knowledge to be inferior to ours. Let us hope we can maintain our superiority, and bring about the end we desire," "By golly, that's right!" muttered Muldoon, "Boriso never struck me as being any master mind. And he admitted his race didn't know the secret of spaceflight."

"Excuse me," interrupted Dr. Kang.
"At one time they did not. But they
must know that secret now."

"Why?"
"How else could Dr. Boris Anjers have reached Earth to serve as an expinance agent for his people? We are forced to assume this Magagean expiration of the property of

know in a little while."

WARREN'S voice interrupted him.
The skipper was seated at the controls, "You've got part of your

answer now, Doc."
"What do you mean, Captain?"
"About spaceflight. The Macozeans have got ships. Because here

comes a flock of them right now."
O'Day's eyes lighted. Restless for action, he had been chafing impatiently ever since they sighted Magog. Now his moment had come. He

sprang to his feet.

"Man the guns! We'll teach those scoundrels—"

"Wait," advised Dr. Kans. "Not

so swiftly. Let us try every peaceful means to win them over first. Dr. Bryant --where is Dr. Bryant?"

"Below," said Muldoon. "He went below a little while ago. I don't think the old man feels so good. He looked sort of funny. Kind of a sick expression around his mouth. And his eyes were glazed, like he was sort of dopey,

or something."

"Well, let us send for him. We will need his advice. And bring Borisu from his cell, too. We must attempt to communicate with the Marogeans.

by radio. We will need Borisu to interpret for us."

Lieutenant MacDonald said, "Yes

sir. Right away, sir," and hurried from the room. Warren, closely scanning the vision

plate, muttered, "Six ... eight ... a dozen of them. If they're friendly, all right. But if they're hostile—"

"You have turned on the force shield?" asked Dr. Kang. "No, but I'll do it now." The skip-

per pushed the black button. "That should take care of any tricks they try to pull. Say—" His voice broke in a sudden exclamation of astonishment. "Say, that's funny! Where did that come from?"
"That? What?" demanded Gary.

"Why—why, it looked like a life skiff. Matter of fact it looked like one of the Liberty's auxiliary craft. It just scooted across the vision plate for a minute and then—I'll try to pick it

a minute and then—I'll try to pick it up again."

Warren twisted the scanning device

deftly, succeeded in centering it upon the foremost of the approaching Magogean spacecraft. He leaned forward, studying intently the scene revealed. "By God, it is a life skiff!" But

what's it doing this far out in space? And where did it come from?" He got his answer, but from an unexpected source. For suddenly the

expected source. For suddenly the audio crackled into activity. The voice of Lieutenaut MacDonald came to them from midships.

"Captain! Captain Warren!"
"Yes? Yes, what is it?"

"It-it's Professor Bryant, sir."
"Bryant? What about him?"

"He's lying in the brig . . . unconscions!" "You mean-you mean Borisu at-

tacked him? Seize the traitor! Bring him here immediately." MacDonald's voice was anguished.

76

"I can't, sir. That's what I'm trying to tell you. The cell door is open . . . one of our auxiliary craft has been stolen from its cradle . . . and Borisu -has escaped!"

CHAPTER XV

Life Everlasting

THE life skiff!" thundered Hugh Warren. "That was Borisu, He's escaped to his own fleet!" "And ruined," groaned Muldoon, "everything. Now they know who we

are, where we came from, and what we want!" MacDonald spoke again from below.

"Dr. Bryant, sir-he's coming around. Shall I-2" "Bring him up here," ordered Lane.

"And for God's sake, hurry!" The audio clicked off. Gary turned

to his companions, "Whatever we're going to do, we've got to do fast. Now they've got wind of our scheme, we may never accomplish it. And if we don't-"

He let the sentence dangle, But all knew as well as he what must follow

if their mission failed. Minutes later, a dazed Dr. Bryant appeared in the turret, supported on the shoulder of the young space lieutenant. He shook his head in sorrow-

ful reply to Gary's unspoken query. "I-I don't know. I can't remember a thing. I was here in the turret with the rest of you. The next thing I knew MacDonald was breaking an ammonia tube under my nostrils. All that happened between is-blank,"

"I told you he looked sick," said Muldoon. "He looked sort of dopey. Like he was drugged or-"

"Or," burst forth Gary Lane with a sudden comprehension, "hypnotized! Doctor, could that have been it?"

Bryant stared at the younger man

confusedly. "Why-why, I don't know, Gary.

It is possible. I remember now that months ago, when Anjers first came to the observatory, one evening we dis-

cussed hypnotism at great length. He claimed some small faculty along that line. I laughed and told him it was impossible for a mesmerist to gain control over a strong minded person, Why

-he experimented with me as the subject. His efforts were a complete failure. Later he acknowledged as much. and we never broached the subject again." "You didn't have to," grunted Lark O'Day. "That experiment wasn't the

failure you thought it. Doctor. On the contrary, it must have been a complete success. At that time, with your cooperation, Borisu established a control over your brain. One which he has never relinquished."

"With my cooperation? But I concentrated upon rejecting his mental suggestions—"

THAT," interrupted Dr. Kang

gently, "is the explanation my good friend. You erred in saying strong wills cannot be hypnotized, Research indicates that quite the opposite is true. It is only the strongwilled who make good hypnotic subiects. Never the dolts, morons, the weak of brain. For in order to accept

hypnotic influence, one must be able to concentrate solely upon a single thought to the exclusion of all others. And only the highly intellectual have this power. I fear it is true you have

been an unwitting partner to Borisu." "I know you have," cried Gary, "There has been one thing which bothered me all along. It was not satisfactorily explained after Borisu admitted he was the one who attacked Muldoon in the observatory. You alibied him at that time, Doctor, You

said you and he were together in your office. Had it not been for this we should have discovered long ago who was the traitor in our midst." "He," moaned the aged scientist,

"must have compelled me to say that, And this time he forced me to come below, open his prison cell, and permit

his escape. But what are we going to do?" "It's not what we're going to do," fumed Flick, "but what we should have

conked that-" "Stow it, Flick," suggested Gary. "There's no use crying over spilt milk. Borisu's skipped. So we'll have to

abandon that plan of approach. We must figure the next best thing? "Skipper? Captain Warren?" Again

the intercommunicating system was alive

"It's Sparks," said Warren, "calling from the radio turret. Yes, Sparks? What is it?"

"A telaudio message coming in. Someone calling us by name," "Borisu," snarled O'Day.

"Pipe it down here, Sparks," ordered the commander of the vessel. "Throw it over the IC so we can all hear it."

"Very good, sir!" There was a moment's hush, then an instant of metallic confusion. Then the incoming message was retransmitted from the radio room to the control turret. A voice was calling, "Spaceskip Liberty! Sig-

nalling the Liberty! Can you hear us?" Warren glanced at his friends significantly. "It is Borisu," he whispered.

"I'd know that souny, accented voice in a million." He pressed the activating control of the turret transmitter and answered, "Souceship Liberty answering. Hugh Warren, commanding officer, speaking. Who are you? What do you want?"

Transmission cleared as the beam between the converging spacecraft strengthened. It was definitely Borisu's voice addressing them. All recognized and tensed with anger to hear

the vindictive mockery in his tone. "What, Captain? But certainly you're clever enough to know without being told. We not only want but demand the immediate surrender of your

ship!" O'DAY'S face turned brick red. His done. I told you we ought to have lean jowls mottled with rage. In stifled tones he choked. "Surrender!

That slimy rat! All right, Skipper. We know where we stand now. Let's unhinge the guns and give them-"

"They are a dozen," reminded Mac-Donald nervously, "to our one," "All right! So what?" blazed O'Day.

"Our weapons will more than match theirs. And we're protected by Dr. Kang's force shield. Come on!" He took three quick strides toward the nearest gun embrazure, and was in

the act of whipping the tarpaulin from the rotor port when Borisu's voice sheered through again.

"That was the reformed corsair's voice I heard, was it not? Well, Captain O'Day-" He stressed the title with gentle irony-"I suggest you think twice before opening hostilities. Having shared your comradeship I am well aware as to the power of your weapon and the strength of the learned Dr. Kang's force shield. However, the weapons mounted on our craft are not the destructive type averted by electrical barriers. Our cuns are 78 ultrawaye cannon."

"Ultrawave!" repeated Dr. Kang, and stayed Lark O'Day's hand swiftly. "Stop, Lark! If he's telling the truth,

our shield is useless."

"What? But I thought it would

"What? Bu stop anything,"

"Anything of material or radiant nature—except cosmic rays. They will penetrate all matter; even our force shield. One blast of their guns can loose upon us the dwindling destruction which they have been using to de-

stroy our universe."
"Well spoken, Dr. Kang," came the taunting voice from afar. "You grasp essential truths with admirable swittness. And now—your surrender, Captain? You will drop your force shield, permitting a boarding party to enter

your ship."

All the while the Magogean had been speaking, Hugh Warren's fingers had been twisting dials on the control panel. Now, his face allame with anger, he roared defiantly, "Like hell we will, Borisu. The Space Patrol dies but never surrenders! If you want to

board us . . . come find us!"

And his finger pressed suddenly down upon the green key installed by the Jovian engineers. A violent shudder trembled the Liberty from stem to stern, warped plates screamed in metal agony, and for an instant it seemed the straining why would have beyen!

stern, warped plates screamed in metal agony, and for an instant it seemed the straining ship would shake herself to shards, so great was the shock of that abrupt movement.

But even as lurching passengers tumbled headlong upon the metal deck, as contact broke abruptly between

their ship and the Magogean fleet, Warren pressed a second stud: this time the red one. Then horror loomed upon horror.

For in the vision plate which foreshadowed the Liberty's trajectory, appeared a gigantic darkness blotting out all space, Gary Lane cried hoarsely, "My God,

what—"
"Hugh!" screamed Nora Powell.
"What have you done?"

BUT Warren's voice smashed through their cries of dismay,

Through their cries of dismay, roaring crisp orders to the control room below. "Search beams, Howard!"

And the young engineer's voice came

back snakily, "Aye, sir! Search beams it is, sir!"

The darkness before them was rent with silver radiance. And what had seemed a black, impenetrable nothing mess was now revealed as a black land-scape over which the Liberty was hurting like a bird in the right. Dark bills loomed starkly through whipping fingers of fog. The searchbeams limned sharp outlines of crags and cullers, forest, thick with uncombed

vegetation. . . .

Dr. Bryant cried, "A planet! But which Warren? One of our own uni-

which, Warren? One of our own universe, or—?"

Warren grinned mirthlessly, "Not

on your life. The only place fo lick an enemy is in his own back yard. Thank heavens, those Jovian engineers taught me how to use their tricky drive! I warped us clean around that space fleet into the night side of their home planet. The world you see beneath us is Magog listel!

"And now for our landine—" His.

"And now for our landing—" His ingers likekered over the studs. The Liberty dropped slowly, smoothly, speed dwindling as Warren searched, for a likely landing place—and found it. A low plateau, cradled like a saucer between entrichine hills.

r. No lights gleamed there; no glare
of hostile cities. There was only Stygian darkness and the interminable
at greenery of jungle. The Liberty, en-

veloped in its matter-repulsing shield. struck once lightly and bounced: dropped lower. Warren released the shield that the ship might settle. Through the metal hull they could hear the crackling of timber as the great ship plowed its way through virgin forest land . . , then the grating grind of metal against rock as the ship wallowed to a landing . . . and lay still.

Hugh Warren cut controls. turned to his friends, panting, his forehead damp with perspiration. But he forced a shaky laugh, and . . .

"All right felts. Turn in your tickets. This is the place we started for."

"CO," SAID Flick Muldoon. "we're here. Actually here on Magog! We've been working and plotting and contriving it seems like forever. And all of a sudden when it seems like we're licked-bingo!--bere we are! Flick's face had a curiously woebegone expression. "I'm confused. No kidding, I'm up a tree. All this time, even though I knew where we were heading. I kept thinking subconsciously that we'd never make it. And now we're here, and I'm puzzled even worse. What are we going to do here?"

Dr. Bryant said, "Well, I should say the first thing we must do is test the gravity and atmosphere of Magog to make sure it's safe for us to venture outside."

"We won't have to worry about that," said Warren. "I told you the

Liberty had all the latest gadgets. The testing apparatus went into action automatically upon our landing, We'll have a complete report in a few minutes."

"Then," said O'Day, "the first thing we must do is find a good hiding place for the Liberty. Or if there isn't one.

camouflage the ship immediately. It's night now, but with morning I've got an idea the Magogean fleet will be circling this planet looking for us. Borisu and his buddies aren't dummies. They'll know we used the quad drive to scoot, and they'll leave no stone unturned-"

Dr. Kang intercupted quietly, "I think that is another point on which you need have no apprehension. By the time morning comes we shall have either accomplished or failed in our mission "

"What?" Gary Lane whistled. "Aren't you a little optimistic, Doc-

tor? We're going to work as swiftly as possible, ves. But getting our job done in a couple of hours is a bit too much to expect." Kang's ivory features framed a

wisp of a smile. "Have you forgotten Borisu's remarks concerning the time differential between our planets?"

Gary said testily, "Not by a long sight. And it's been worrying me plenty. Borisu said Magog had been playing the cosmic ray cannon on our universe for only twenty years. Yet it is a scientifically recognized fact. that the planet which existed between Mars and Jupiter in our system was destroyed no less than 40,000 Earth years ago. Isn't that so, Dr. Bryant?" "Quite true, Gary," agreed the older scientist worriedly.

"Therefore," pointed out Lane, "every Magogean year is the equivalent of two thousand Earth years: every day on this planet the equivalent of three Earth years, And--" His breath caught in his throat--"since our calculations prove that the critical dwindling point of Sol can be at most no more than two months away, we must fulfill our task here in a matter of Magogean hours-or our universe will die 12

AT HIS words the younger men in the turret sprang to their feet as Flick spoke for all when he cried. "Then what are we waiting for? Let's get going! My God, we've got to move and move fast-"

"Gently, gently," chided Dr. Kang. Again one of his rare smiles touched his lips. "Youth is impetuous. It is written, 'The young man tests the balance of the sword: the elder sage admires its chaste engraving.' Dr. Lane's discovery would be frightening . . . if it were based on fact. But there is another way of viewing the matter. One you have not pondered. Have you failed to take into consideration the length of the Magogean year?"

Dr. Bryant stopped him in midsentence, his eyes lighting with swift admiration. "But, of course! That is extremely important. If the orbital revolution of Magog takes longer than "I believe," said Dr. Kang placidly,

that of Earth-"

"you will find it does. Approximately 2000 times longer! We have not, just now, the time to study the truth of my conjecture. But from certain factors I have noticed, I believe we shall find this to be true. The size of Magog argues a slow orbital movement,

"In brief, my friends, I conclude that Magog revolves about its primary but a single time while Earth is whirling around the Sun two thousand times. There is, therefore, a one-toone correspondence between the time units of our systems. We may completely disregard their relative size. A 'day' on Magoe may equal 2000 Earth days-but twenty-four Earthly hours spent on Magog are of no longer duration than the same period spent on Earth. We may govern our actions accordingly."

Gary said soberly, "I certainly hope you are right, Doctor. Otherwise,

howsoever short a time we spend in this system may be too long to save our universe. But-but you realize what this meens, don't you? I am thinking now of the life span of the Mago-

geans." Dr. Kang nodded, "I realize very well. It means that if they live an average of sixty to a hundred Magogean years, each of them exists for a period of many thousands of Earth years. But-" He shrugged-"is it too unreasonable to concede this? Has not our Earthly science already suggested that the shortness of our life span may be due to the bombardment of cosmic rays? Here on Magog where they do not live beneath this

lethal radiation-"

his eyes lighted raptly. He said, "Then it is not only the immediate existence of our universe for which we are fighting, but another and greater goal. One of which mankind has dreamed for centuries. If we succeed in putting to an end this cosmic radiation, we may win for our people not only life, but_"

Dr. Bryant's fine features cleared,

"Yes," nodded Dr. Kang, "Almost . . . eternal life!"

CHAPTER XVI

Cosmic Allies

"RIPES1" said Flick Muldoon, awed, "Eternal life! Golly, that's almost enough time for a guy to catch up on his back sleep," "Or." chuckled O'Day, "really learn

how to play a good game of tri-chess.* But this is no time to be talking about things like that. The first problem is: how are we going to contact the Magogeans again?"

"I think-" Hugh Warren had risen abruptly to his feet as a light flashed on the signal panel before them—"I think we won't have to worry about that problem. The Magogens seem to have already contacted us! See that warning? It means there is someone at the airlocks."

"Then quickly," snapped Gary, "turn on the force shield, Hugh!" Dr. Kang shook his head. "It is too

late, now. If invaders have lighted the warning signal they are already inside the protective envelope." He turned worried eyes to the space patrolman. "What shall we do. Cantain?"

"There's only one thing to do," grunted Warren. "Find out who it is, then blast them to hell-and-gone out. Hawkins!" He bawled the name out over the audio. A moment later the little cockney steward bustled into the turret.

"Comin' hup, Captain. You called me?"

"Yes, Break open the ordnance lockers. Supply every man aboard with arms. I'm afraid we have visitors." Hawking original length to the the

Hawkins grinned impishly. He didn't scare easily. "Right, Cap'n, Side arms all around it is, sir." And he scampered away as Warren turned to his companions.

"All right, Let's go have a little look-see at our unexpected guests." Moments later they were standing

in the companionway beside the fore sta'b'rd lock. As the turret's warning system had advised, someone was outside the ship. A duplicate signal, acti-

"This view is highly involved mome of tradimensional these played on a series of sight supransport divises learned. Pieces more not why bedroublish; is in the attact! retiling muse, may be a series of the sight of the sight of the pieces are used in onlyacidis with the tradilocal "pieces, happle, baloop," et al., the "pilet", which may ensere in any direction bednaday or vitricity and opposed by another architecturing computes of these requirements. It wirely above and three beninntal, or were vera divergarding, computes of these requires—85.

"I vated by electric eye, was flashing on ut the airlock's inner port. Not only that, in but through the acrated protection ee chamber could be locard faint noises of c- someone repping or fumbling with the exterior controls.

O'Day nodded at Lane significantly,
"Magogeans, all right. But our pal
Boriss's not with them. He'd know
how to operate the lock from outside.

le They don't,"

Gary said tightly, "Well, since the mountain can't come to Mohammed—" and drew down the lever which opened the inner port. The noises were clearer now. In addition to the scrabbling sound there were faint murmurs, a low babble of indistinguishable vaices.

Warren glanced swiftly at instruments on the airlock wall, modded to his companions. "Gravity and atmosphere OQ. We're adjusted to the fixed by our changed size, I guess, and the second approaches Earth's normal. Everybody set? I'll throw open the outer door. The minute you see them, let

And his hand reached for the second control lever, that which would open the passageway between the Liberty's interior and the outer darkness. But even before the activating machinery could throw the massive door open, a single voice raised above those others which muttered outside. And the words it spoke startled all the Liberty's requipage into stunned immobility. For in clear, unmistakable terms, the voice repeated a single phrase in time lan-

guages . . . Jovian, Solar Universal, and Amer-English. "Phaedu m'akki, toratu'sl! . . .

Amiji sumo; ammité . . . We are friends; let us in!" Gary gasped, "Good Lord! English!"

"A trick!" Lark warned. "Don't take any chances!"

But then the great door swung open. And even he allowed his ready weapon to fall to his side as there stood outlined in the bright oblong of the portal a group of azure-tinted men similar in trappings and appearance to their Jovian benefactors.

DR. BRYANT choked, "Men of Jupiter! But how come you here?" The leader of the newcomers, both arms widely outstretched in token of

pacific intent, smiled with bappiness at

learning which tongue he should employ. In precise and only faintly accented English he said hesitantly, "No, not uff Juniter, Misser. We are chiltren of

the planet Gog.35 "Gog!" exclaimed Gary. "But that planet has not existed for--"

A cloud darkened the stranger's eyes. He nodded sorrowful agreement. "For many centuries your time . . . for long years, ours. Nor did any uff us here ever see our parent planet. We

are the children and the children's children uff our forefathers who once ruled Magog." Warren, suddenly remembering his

obligation as space captain and host, said, "Gad, this is incredible! But we can't talk bere. Come into the ship where we can be comfortable while we get acquainted."

The Gogean leader turned to the doorway, raised his voice to an assemblage of attendants. Muttered replies and the stirring of many bodies in the darkness betold acceptance of his command. Then, designating one or two to be his companions, he followed Warren to the Liberty's lounge.

And there in an ultramodern Earthly space-cruiser was held the strangest conference ever attended by humans. A conference between adventurers of two solar worlds and representatives of an alien galaxy whose ancient culture

had long since vanished from mankind's ken.

It was a give-and-take exchange ex-

citing to both sides. "We baff been looking for you," said

the Gogean leader, Tsalnor, "and hoping against hope we might somehow get in touch with you. When we saw your ship and recognized it to be no space vessel of the Magogean fleet, our hearts leaped with joy. Joy which increased when you landed scarce four talus from our encampment."

"Saw our ship?" exclaimed Nora, "In this impenetrable darkness?"

THE Gogean shrugged "Darkness light . . . what difference do these things make? We whose lives are spent in everlasting night make no distinction. Long years ago we were forced to either lose the power uff vision entirely or adapt our eyesight to seeing in the dark. Our people haff done the latter

"When, years ago, the Magogeans with the help of their diabolic ultrawave cannon succeeded in overthrowing our empire, those uff us who were not slain sought refuge here on the eternally dark side of Magog."

"Eternally dark side!" broke in Dr. Kang, "But of course! I had guessed the period of axial revolution might be slow, but did not realize it coincided exactly with that of your planet's orbital revolution about its primary. Like our solar planet Mercury, Magog pre-

sents always the same face to its sun!" "True," said Tsalnor bitterly, "And for two decades half our people languished here, never seeing the glorious light uff day, save when a few members uff daring expeditions venture into the Twilight Zone for essential supplies we cannot here obtain."

"But-but don't the Magogeans know you are here? There must be many of you."

many of you."

Tealnor said hitterly, "We number in the hundreds uff thousands. And they know we are here, yes. But they dare attack us no more than we have dared attack their fortified cities. There exists between us an implacable hatted, but an armed truce. For neither force dares meet its enemy on that enemy's

home terrain.

"Yes," he continued, "we who were millions now number in the hundreds uff thousands. But those who claim Gog is dead would eat their words to see the cities we half hewn from these harsh rocks. We half culture here, li-

braries and science.

"And—" he gritted—"an ever watchful army uff men who will someday arise to reclaim that which is rightfully theirs!"

Dr. Kang roused suddenly from an attitude of thought. "There is one thing which puzzles me, Tsalnor, Your knowledge of the language of our universe. You addressed us not only in modern Jovian tongue but in Universal and English as well. How knew you these languages?"

Tushor answered proudly, "By long study and careful translation, uff course. For many of your centuries we haff been listening to the speech transmitted via etherwaves by what you call your radio. Our people have long studied your three most-used languages against the ever-hoped-for day when our empire should be resurrected."

"But," demanded Gary shrewdly,
"since you know our tongue, how is it
you never attempted to communicate
with us? If you have receivers to pick
up our radio conversation, certainly
you should be able to build transmitters
as well?"

"Certainly, we could do so, Earthman. But we would not dare. We are not fools, but neither are our adver-

saries. Were we to build transmitting units here on Magog's Darkside, by directional finders they could locate our cities and send a space armada to wipe us out uff existence.

"No, we haff had to wait and build and hope and plan for just such a day

as this.
"But now--" And his eyes lighted
raptly--"Now at last you haff come!
Working together, we shall overthrow
the Magogeans, stay the disaster you

the Magogeans, stay the disaster you haff told me threatens our ancient universe, and again he free to look upon the sun."

CAPTAIN Hugh Warren spread his

hands in a gesture of despair. "You know you have our friendship. We would do anything within our power to help you, but—what can we do? If you, with a great army, have never been able to hreach the Magogean defenses, what can our pitiful group do—?"

"You," said Tsalnor promptly, "can do what no Gogean can do . . effect entry to Magog's capital, and there work from within to destroy the harrier wall which protects it. When that wall falls our warriors will flood into the city of Khundru in bordes—"

"We? But why we-?"
Tsalnor smiled mirthlessly. "It is a
matter uff bue."

Warren jumped. "Who, me?"

"No," said Dr. Bryant. "Not you, Hugh—huel I see what he means. It is a matter of fleshly color. The Magogcans are our color, or nearly so. Dr. Borts Anjers' was of a complex for Borts Anjers' was of a complex for a ficiently similar to that of an Earthman to pass himself off for many years as a Eurasian. Similarly see might, I suppose, masquerade as Magogeans—"

He turned a questioning gaze to Tsalnor. The Gogean nodded. "Exactly. Let one uff our blue-fleshed brethren but present an appearance before any Magagean and he would be

raved down mercilessly without ever being granted an opportunity to speak. "You alone haff the coloration which

would permit entry into the city uff Khundru-

"Where is this city?"

"A very short distance from here. Scarce more than a hundred talus, on the edge of the Twilight Zone." "And you say it's the Magogean

capital? Isn't that location a rather dangerous one for their most important

84

city?" "On the contrary, Khundru is located at an axis uff vital strategic importance. It spans the estuary uff the river Driva where it meets the Pinoor Sea, and is protected from assault from either side by lofty mountain ranges.

Its rear is protected by Darkside." "But you spoke of a barrier shield." "Yes. It is that which prevents our

armed forces from storming Khundru. About and around their capital the Magageans have forced some sort uff an invisible harrier impenetrable by any material substance. What this is, we do not know. Unable to study it at first hand, our scientists haff never been

able to study its secret." "Invisible barrier! A force shield!" Gary Lane spun swiftly to their Martian comrade. "Dr. Kang, it must be something like the force shield you in-

stalled on the Liberty/" Kang nodded slowly. "Very likely. I know now why Borisu never questioned me so eagerly about the activation of my device as he did the Iovian engineers about their quad warp. It was because he already understood it."

"You mean." demanded the Gorgan. "you comprehend this mechanism?" Kang nodded.

"Lot then no one need enter Khundru!"

"Unfortunately, someone must, There is no way to rupture an entropic force battier from without. If your divisions are to storm Khundru, the wall must be broken from the control room inside that city."

ARY drew a deep breath, "OO, GARY drew a new Lark . . . Hugh

. . . Flick . . . " "A moment, Gary," interrupted Lark.

"Just how are we to effect entry into Khundru? Will there be questions to ask or answer?"

Tsalnor puzzled briefly. "It would be best," he decided, "to pass yourselves off as common serfs. We shall teach you the Magogean language and acquaint you with its customs. But it would take too long a training to enable you to pass yourselves as members uff the ruling class. There are but two divisions uff Magogeans. The common people, serfs who are little more than feudal slaves; and the kraedars, or overlords--"

"That's what Borisu called himself." remembered Gary. "Krnedar." "The kraedars are the military and ruling class. You would never he able

to pass yourself off successfully as one uff these. Therefore it were wiser to allow yourselves to be taken into the city as workers. This may entail some hardships, but you will be inside where you want to be. And once there, your own ingenuity can devise ways and means uff doing that which is needful."

"I thought," nodded Kang, "the situation would be something like that In that case, Gary, you must change your plans. Nothing would arouse Magogean suspicion quicker than to have five strong, strapping, young strangers seek entry to their capital

city . . . particularly on the heels of the report Borisu may even now be submitting to his peers."

"But who, then-?" questioned time left to do it in."

"Why not," suggested Kang quietly,
"just my daughter and myself? We
understand the operation of the force
shield. Of the two of us, surely one

shield. Of the two of us, surely one can find some way to break the Magogean barrier for a short time."

gogean barrier for a short time.

Gary said stubbornly, "The idea is a good one, Dr. Kang. But two is not enough. Let it be the three of us."

"The *four* of us," broke in Lark O'-Day. "If Penny's going, I want to be in on this shindig, too."

"Why not," suggested Nora Powell,
"count me in? With two women out
of five, certainly we would seem an
innocuous little band. A family circle,
so to speak, with Dr. Kang as the parent, Penny and I his married daughters—"

Kang said dubiously, "I don't know. There is too much difference in the pigmentation of our skins for us to be taken as a family unit. True, my daughter's flesh is little more golden than yours. Miss Powell—"

than yours, Miss Powell—"
Tsalnor dismissed the objection with
a short laugh.

"You do not know Magog, Dr. Kang. Such dissimilarities in coloration are not the exception but the rule amongst their people. The Magogean hordes haff interbred to such an extent that the closest blood brothers oft look like men of different races. Miss Powell's plan is quite feasible."

"OQ," said Gary. "Then that's the ticket. How long to put us through this teaching-training period you were

this teaching-training period you were talking about?"
"Not long. Those things will be done

during studying periods and even while you sleep . . . electrically." "Then," said Gary, rising, "let's

move the *Liberty* to your headquarters and get on with the job. Because there's lots to be done, and very little

CHAPTER YVII

Inside Khundru

"GARY," said Nora, "I'm frightened, Suppose—"

"Hush, my dear," warned Dr. Kang swiftly. "From now on speak only in the Magogean tongue. Suspicious ears may lurk at any crossroads."

A full week's time, as measured by earthly watches, had passed since the Liberty's fortunate landing near the Gogean camp. In that time all the space venturers, and particularly those who were to attempt the first reaching of Khundru's extes, had been given an intensive training course in the other world's formalities. Through means of instruments so ingeniously clever that the Earthmen could only marvel at them, there had been electrically superimposed upon their brain structures a knowledge-pattern giving them complete acquaintance with the Magogean tongue, habits, customs, traditions, something of the history of the race, and even a general knowledge of current events.

"I'm sorry," whispered Nora, shifting to the Magogean tongue, "but—but I'm frightened, Gary. Suppose we should meet Borisu?" Lark O'Day grunted, "He'd have

Lark O'Day grunted. "He'd have one hell of a time recognizing us dressed —or undressed—like this."

He scowled disdainfully at the crude peon garb with which his sturdy frame was draped; clothing which consisted of little more than worn sandals, a twisted, filthy rag about his loins, and a loose, sacklike halter draped from

his shoulders.
Gary admitted ruefully, "We aren't exactly candidates for a sartorial award. But this is the best disguise

we could possibly effect. The Magagean kraedars spurn their slaves like dust beneath their feet. Even if we were to neet Borisu, he would look past or through us and never notice our faces. And that's what we want." .

"It's damn hard on the girls. though," grunted O'Day, "The least the blue boys could have done was given us a lighter cart. One we three could handle by ourselves, without them having to act as dray horses, too. Ease up there, Penny. Don't ruin those pretty hands."

Kang's daughter glanced at him sidewise and smiled. She said in a soft, liquid voice, "Do not worry about us, Lark. It were better Nora and I ruined our soft hands on this cart than that your fighting hands should not be ready when the mo-

ment comes. Is it not so, Nora?" Nora, tugging beside her at the draw-tongue of the cumbersome vehicle which comprised part of the typical impedimenta of lower class Magogean nomads, smiled agreement.

"Much better. Though I confess I don't envy those whose rôles we are playing. I wouldn't like to do this all the time."

"I don't believe," said Kang in a low voice, "you are going to have to do it much longer. For see? Before

us? A city on the river's edge, and armed soldiers watching our proach. You know our story?" "Yes."

"Good! Remember it well. We must make no mistake."

T'HIS was their last exchange of free, unguarded speech. For as he had said, the soldiers had spotted them, and a company was moving forward to challenge their approach.

They did so, Gary Lane could not help thinking, in a manner typically

Magogean. Not with any warmth or friendliness, but in dictatorial tones of sharn suspicion

"Hold, there, slaves! Who are you? Whence came you? Whither are you going?"

Gary, haltered shoulder to shoulder

beside his friend and comrade, felt Lark O'Day's body stiffen with sunpressed rage at this form of address But like himself, O'Day remained hunched, with head hanging stupidly low, as if both were the witless serfs they pretended to be.

The elderly Kang spoke, as had been agreed, for their group,

"Greetings, O warriors of strength and valor. I am the freedman, Kengu. These are my daughters and their mates. We come from the Twilight Zone to seek employment in the city of Khundru."

"Twilight Zone?" demanded the warrior captain suspiciously. "What

were you doing there?" "For three years," answered Kang, "we labored there in the service of the

kracdar Alisur. Now the noble kracdar is dead. We have no master." He could say this confidently. From a Magogean newscast had been learned of Alisur's recent and opportune de-

mise. That Alisur had been an explorer operating in the Twilight Zone was a feature upon which they had been swift to capitalize The warrior captain nodded and

strode to the cart, pulled back the sacking with which it was covered. "And what have you here? Valuable goods, no doubt, you stole from

your dead master?" "Nay, Noble One. Naught but our common household belongings. Bed-

ding and articles of furniture. Clothing . . . utensils for cooking." The captain, peering into the laden

cart, grunted disdainfully and threw

back its cover, "The old man speaks truth. The foul cart reeks of rubbish. Very well, old fool, on your way. Report yourself to the guardsman at the Twillight Gate, and show him this pass." He scribbled briefly on something resembling paper, tossed it at Kang. "This will permit you to enter the city. Wait!" A look of cunning stole into the chieftain's eyes. "Of course there is the matter of an entry

fee. You have some money?"

Kang answered humbly, "Very little, my lord. Scarce enough to sustain
us until we have succeeded in finding

employment. Barely five units..."
"Hand it over!" demanded the other harshly. "There are five of you. The entry lee is a unit each. Well, swiftly, slave! Or must I use the last?"

HE FINGERED almost hopefully the braided whip which dangled at his betl. But docilely Kang withdrew a sweat-stained leather pouch from his garments and handed it to the captain. And without further challenge they stumbled down the road to the entry cote.

Here they were stopped by a sentry, and Kang proffered the captain's note. The sentry read it, Gary thought, almost angrily, and grumbled, "Curse Dralia!" I suppose he got what money you had?"

Kang answered meckly, "We had but five units, sir. And that was the entry fee, the captain told us." "Curse him," repeated the sentry.

"He bleeds them all white before they get this far! Very well, in with you. But look sharp you move in a hurry when this light turns white. If you're only half way over the line when the shield closes again, God help you!"

He laughed unpleasantly, pressed a button, and spoke into a diaphragm beside him. An instant later a light at

the sentry box glowed white, and hurriedly the five slaves, straining, tugged their heavy cart into motion. They had barely succeeded in crossing the designated line when, with a sudden, crackling sound, a dust film rose from the ground behind them and the white

light went out.

Gary, glancing back at Dr. Kang,
saw the old man's forehead was beaded
with perspiration. When he looked
askance, Kang whispered, "They don't
take many chances. They didn't heave
the harrier onen lone. If we had been

a minute slower in bringing the cart through—"
"What?" asked Nora Powell.
"The closing barrier would have

smashed us into atoms. But we have learned one important thing, at any rate."

"Yes?" asked Gary.

"Again," said Dr. Kang, "as several times belore, we have tangible evidence that the Magogean culture is not so high as they would believe. My pople—"he said almost proudly—"have ways to open one portion of the fore shield at a time, admitting friends to tis protection through a small opening. Theirs is a more elementary form. The said of the provided of the provi

companions into the city of Khundru. It was a strange city. Even Lark O'Day, who of them all was best capable to judge, having flung his madcap way afar amongst the planets of Sol's universe. admitted that.

"I've seen Greater New York," he said, "and Imperial Ceres. They're about tops in ultramodern culture. I've seen the barbaric splendors of the Venusian capital, and the filthy mud hovels the Mercurians call—or used to call—their temples. But never anywhere have I seen anything which looked like this."

And he shook his head bewilderedly at the heterogeneous architectural display sprawling about them. Khundru was a city of contradictions; the dwelling place of a people who believed

themselves capable of attainments greater than they possessed.

LIERE both sides of a thoroughfare so exquisitely inlaid and tessellated that it might have graced the entrance to a potentate's seraelio. would be lined with dingy, malodorous dwellings earthborn dogs might have scorned to sleep in. Turn a corner and the eyes widened to behold great gilded temples towering skyward in a setback architecture dwarfing the most hopeful achievements of any solar race. The sky above the city was athrong with space and air vessels . . . huge, thundering rockets and gossamer-winged glidercraft of scintillant beauty . . . but the streets below rumbled with the wooden wheels of such cumbersome

The sights, the smells, the street sounds of the city were comparable to those of an oriental bazaar in thought Lane. Earth's woefully anachronistic Twentieth Century: that period when only a nortion of humanity's masses had known the delights of civilized existence.

hauled painfully along.

Even without the benefit of the training to which they had been exposed they could have picked their way almost unerringly to the city's center. Khundru was built like a huge wheel about the central hub which was its Palace Royal. The streets through which they threaded their way was a spoke of this wheel

In the Palace Royal, they knew, could be found not only the govern-

ing but also the dwelling chambers of the highly elect Kraedary the ruling gentry of Magog. There also was to be found the vital control center of this invawling actorus whose tentacles they must paralyze so the Gogean army could burst into the city

But if they had hoped to attain so far without challenge, they were bitterly disappointed. For they had penetrated scarcely a third of the way when a sudden clamor aroused them from their furtive study of the city. Voices cried out, whether in surprise, alarm or joy was hard to tell, and the milling throng which but a moment ago had rubbed shoulders with them too closely for comfort began to clear from the thoroughfare and buddle fearfully against the walls of the street. Gary glanced at Dr. Kang, his eye-

brows asking the question his lips barely muttered.

"What now?"

Kang answered softly, "I do not know. But there is a saying of your people, 'When in Rome, do as the vehicles as that which they themselves Romans do.' Quickly, move the cart to the curbing, and let us take our places with the others."

> But before the awkward tumbrel could be dragged from the right of way. with a flurry of brazen hoofs and a raucous clarnor of trumpets there galloped around the corner and squarely down upon them a small troop of mounted lancers.

THERE was room and to spare for these haughty warriors to pass them by . . . but such was not the way of the Magogean kraedaru. As the cavalry captain, drawing near, saw upon the street one cart which had not vet moved completely to the curb, one tiny knot of struggling seris who had not as yet taken abject posts against the wall, a flush darkened his cheeks



the cavelry captain bore directly down on Dr. Kang's car

and his eyes darted anger. With a down upon Dr, Kang and his "family." guttural cry he changed his troop's Then, at the last possible moment, straightforward charge, bore directly when it seemed certain his armed war-

riors and their mounts must trample ruthlessly over the hodies of the trapped quintet, shattering their cart to aplinters, he drew up his men, and, his voice heavy with rage, leaned from his saddle and cried to Dr. Kang:

"You there, slave-what means this? How dare you deliberately block our passage?"

"Why, you-" began Lark O'Day. But Lane, standing with his head abjectly bowed beside his friend, gripped

the other man's wrist to silence him. And from the cart, Dr. Kang answered in a thin, meek voice:

"Forgiveness, Excellence. Your servants did not know...."

"The lash!" cried the warrior captain. "Twenty to each of them, then let us be gone. Or-Wait!" His eyes narrowed as the implication of Kang's words struck him. "Did not know? You did not recognize our signal as we

You are not of Khundro 12 "Nav. master," whined Kang. "We are poor exiles of a far northern city, Tabori by name, but recently come out

of the Twilight Zone to seek service in the noble capital of our race-of "Recently come?" The chieftain's eyes narrowed still farther. "Where is your master, serf?"

"Our master is dead, sire." Kang explained as he had explained to the captain of the harrier guard. But it was evident that in Khundru the higher a man's post the greater became his authority and greed. For scarce had he revealed that their erstwhile master was no more than the cavalry leader

"No master, ch? That situation shall soon he remedied. By the rank and authority which is mine as a kraedar of Khundru I hereby claim you as mine own. Not-" He laughed - "that I shall put you to use, A Cap-

interrupted him.

tain of the Royal Guard has no need of house servants. But your two sons should make sturdy slaves for the tilling of someone's land. And your two daughters-"

He paused and stroked his jaw re-

flectively. It was clear that the Cantain of the Royal Guards was reconsidering his need of servants. To forestall his thinking, Kang spoke hurriedly, invoking a law which he had learned existed amongst the Magageans.

"A thousand pardons, sire-but we are not slaves. We are freedmen. When our master died he gave us household goods and chattels wherewith to establish our own little

home....." "So?" The kraedar laughed mockingly, "Yet if you had not these things, old man, you would be slaves again, is it not so? Well, then-"

He turned and barked a command approached? Where are you from? to his soldiers, Instantly bright weapons leaned from their belts to their hands. And it was with the barest warning the quintet of Solarites managed to scramble from the proximity

of the cart as the blazing rays of a dozen ultrawave handguns soat flame upon the cart. In a moment of searing fire the vehicle was gone, blasted to oblivion by those frightful rays. "So," continued the captain, "having

no chattels of your own, you are again Tramir Chingru-herd me slaves these cattle to the mart, and there get for me the best price you can. And mind," he added dangerously, "you bring me back all the profits. Make no mistake as to the amount "

A single warrior fell out of formation, gestured the quintet into a little knot before him, and pointed the way down a side avenue. The warrior cantain, smirking with satisfaction. spurred his company on its journey.

An hour later all five were parcels

Imperial Khundru.

of merchandise in the slave mart of CHAPTER XVIII

The Control Tower

CTANDING there in the slave mart of Imperial Khundru, Gary Lane realized-as millions of his human brethren had discovered in past agesthat it is one thing to experience an emotional uprising when reading about a situation, but quite another to be involved in that situation yourself.

In his university history classes Gary had read of the day when unenlightened Earthmen enslaved their human brothers, offering their flesh and services to hire on the auction block. From a purely rational standpoint he had disapproved of this barbaric custom, in this age happily abandoned, But now, here on a planet inconceivably far from the little world called Earth, he himself was not only witnessine such a deal in human wares but was, indeed, one of the chattels to be

auctioned! As his mind busied himself with abortive plot and speculation, his eyes roved covertly about his surroundings. He saw the raised central dais amon which a lean and hawknesed auctioncer singsonged the merit of a thickthewed and filthy serf. He saw the encircling throng of bidders, Magogeans ranging through all walks of life from the lowest freedmen land-owners. through the merchantmen exporters, to the claborately caparisoned lords and nobles who folled in their scented boxes. raising listless fingers in token of bid when an offering took their fancy.

What turn this controlemps would take he could not guess. But he was not left long in wonderment. For the warrior into whose hands they had

been placed was impatient to rejoin his troop; with a stern command that his charges await his return, he shouldered his way through the mob to the auction block As soon as he had gone, Lark turned

to Gary, a question in his eyes, "Make a break for it?"

Dr. Kang spoke before Gary could answer. "It would be useless. Lark. They would only catch us again. As seris we cannot expect freedom. We might as well wait and let them sell us to whomsoever they will. If we cause no trouble we can more easily learn that which we need to know." Gary said, "The cart's gone. That's

a had break. With it were our cached arms. We're helpless now, trapped in the middle of Khundru-" "Hush!" warned Nora, "Here comes

our guard again, with the auctioneer."

T WAS so. Apparently the soldier had argued to the tradesman the necessity of selling this quinter immediately. For though the auctioneer grumbled and complained, he led the five to the dais. His shrill singsong resumed its wheedling chant.

"And now. O nobles and freedmen." he whined, "a special consignment from the chattels of the kraedar Pridu. Captain of the Royal Guards. A family of Taborians, newly come to our city from years of talented service in the Twilight Zone under the deceased kraedar Alisur. Said family consisting of one elderly male in good physical condition, two young and sturdy males and their mates, two fine, fertile females. How is your wish? Have I a bid on this family as a lot?"

"Fine and fert-" brgan Lark O'Day, outraged

Kang silenced him with a gesture, There came no bid from the assemblage, but a voice cried, "We want no job lot goods in muffled packages. Bring them out one at a time and let us see them. The females first,"

"As you wish, my lord," agreed the auctioneer, "So be it." And he reached down from his dais, seized the wrist of the lovely Martian, Pen-N'hi, and hauled her to his side. "Behold, O wise purchasers," he cried. "Here is one of the females. A fine, staunch creature in the bloom of her young womanhood. Lovely and graceful as the fleeting catooni * but vet-" And he winked lecherously at the mob-"not too young to be acquainted with the Lore of a Thousand Delights in which she was well trained by her late

master." "Rat!" grated Lark between his teeth. "Another crack like that-" "Silence!" whispered Kang. "His

words mean nothing. It is written, 'Speech will neither spot the lily's face, nor hide the leper's sores," "

A voice raised from the audience. "Two hundred dwari, Tisru!" Tisru's sharp face looked grieved.

"Two hundred, sire? For a beautiful mistress such as this? Two thousand, you mean. Behold this graceful throat, this slender waist . . , these tiny hands which can thrill with a thousand caresses-"

"Three hundred," cried another

voice. "Four hundred."

"Five hundred."

"Six" The auctioneer's oily insinuations

did not lack the power to titillate his listeners. A flurry of interest sharnened the bidding. "Eight hundred" . . . "Nine!" . . .

"One thousand dwari!" "Behold those eyes, those feet, those

Cateoni: a Magogram woodland beast similar to the Virginia red-tailed deer, but with sex legs and two sets of vestigial wings,-Ed.

golden arms . . ." "Twelve hundred, Tisru!"

"She can sing and dance and play sweet music . . ."

"Fourteen hundred!" "Behold those lins, gentlemen . . .

those dainty, shell-like ears-" A coarse laugh broke from one of his listeners

"Stop pointing out things we all can see. Tisru. I told you before, we want no packaged goods. Off with the wo-

man's rags that we may know on what we bid." It was evident that Tisru had been cleverly biding his time for some such

request. Now, with the air of a sculptor preparing to unveil a masterniece. he pretended humble acquiescence to the demand.

"Very well, my lords and masters," he whined. "Then prepare vourselves for a vision of blinding radiance-"

HIS greasy talons reached out to clutch the single supporting halter of Penny's crude garment. The girl froze at his touch, and a color suffused her clear golden skin, but true to the teachings of her race she said no word, but stood stock-still with lowered head But if Penny could endure personal

degradation for the good of their cause, and if Kang could philosophically accept this as a necessary evil, not so the two young Earthmen. As if both stanchions of a bridge had broken simultaneously, Lark O'Day and Gary Lane hurled themselves for-

ward side by side. O'Day's voice was a blaze of fury, "Take your hands off her, you slimy

weasel!" With a slashing blow he loosened the man's grip, hauled Penny to the shelter of his arm.

Tisru gasped. Fierce anger par-

proped for a knife sheathed in his belt. But he never touched it. For at that moment Gary struck. His right fist moved scarce fifteen inches, but it smashed the auctioneer's bearded chin with a furious accuracy. The man flew backward off the dais, flailing, awkward, scrambling, spitting blood from his broken lins.

Then everything was bedlam. The crowd came to its feet, rooring in outrage at the sight of serfs who dared rebel. Knives whipped from belts as figures surged forward. Not only knives but deadly ray guns, too. And Gary panted, "We're in for it now!

Stand them off as long as you can, Lark. I'll see what I-" But there came an interruption. A

sharp incisive voice rose from somewhere at the back of the throng, "No! Touch not the slaves! Let

none move another step!" All heads turned as one. A current of astonishment coursed through the throug, swelling to a murmur as the speaker was recognized. "Moranu, Seneschal of the Inner Council!" And there pressed through yielding ranks a Magogean clad even more grandiloquently than any the Salarites had yet seen. A tall, impressive figure who

carried himself with an air of supreme and confident authority. Haughtily he strode to the steps of the dais, there confronted the rebels.

"Now, by the gods," he marveled, "vou two must be madmen. Had I not been passing by, for your rebellion at this moment your hones would be pickines for the curs of the streets." "The curs of this city," ground O'Day savagely, "are not all four-

legged--" "But in me," continued the newcomer, "you find one who admires a fighting spirit in bowsoever an unsus-

nected source it may be found. Ave, rowed his eyes, and with a hiss he and an eye which needs no stark unveiling to detect beauty, Tisru!" He turned to the auctioneer who, glaring malevolently at his attackers, had cringed back onto the dais. "I will bid me this family of rebel serfs. What is your price?"

The auctioneer pleaded greasily, "I can set no price, my lord. This is an open auction with chattels sold to

the highest bidder." "So?" The Seneschal eved each of the quintet in turn, appreciatively appraising the two girls, nodding his head slowly at the frames of the two young men. Dr. Kang he dismissed with a clance, then turned to Tisru.

"The old one I do not want. For the young ones, as a lot, ten thousand dwari. Is there a higher bid?"

TISRU knew there would not be Not only was the price staggeringly high, but none in this audience dared bid against the Seneschal of the Inner Council.

He shook his head, gasping, "Nay, sire, there is no other bid. For that price take also the old one, with the compliments of Tisru's Mart."

The Moranu nodded to a servant, who negligently tossed a bag to the auctioneer. The lord nodded to his new purchases. "Follow me," he commanded, and led the way from the market place.

An excited hum rose from the crowd to follow their exit.

S THEY followed their new A "owner" it was all the members of the Solarite quintet could do to mask the triumph which threatened to reveal itself on their features. For almost instantly it became clear that they were being led to that very spot they had hoped, but had not known Khundru's circle which was the Palace Royal.

As they journeyed along, their superiors mounted on the curiously horse-

As they journeyed along, their superiors mounted on the curiously horselike creatures which the Magogeans called batanidi, themselves, of course, humbly afoot, they could not help but

overhear the conversation between Moranu and his companions. "Ten thousand dwari! That was a

lot to pay, my Lord Seneschal, for five carcasses," said one.

Moranu chuckled. "It was worth it to see the spittle of greed drool from that hawknosed old scoundrel's lips. Nor is it a had buy. Of course, the old one . . . I do not know where we

can use him-You, aged serf!" he cried to Dr. Kang. "What talents

have you, if any?"

Kang scraped servilely and said, "I have a smattering of mechanical lore, O master. Much my former owner taught me about the operation of in-

struments and machines."

"So? And much you have forgotten
by this time, no doubt," grunted
Moranu. "Still. I think I know a

storanu. "Still, I think I know a place where you can be of use. The control tower. You will need no strength there but that sufficient to push buttons."

The control tower! It was with an

effort that Gary Lane restrained the cry that surged to his lips. But his eyes leaped to those of the aged doctor, and found there assurance that Kang would well know what to do when he found himself within the control

tower.
"And the young men?" asked another of the riders.

"For the Games, of course," laughed Moranu. "Where else? Tell me, when have you seen before two slaves with such spirit and courage as these showed? It will be worth many an

of afternoon of boredom to watch these ace pit themselves against the fanged goraru * or the two-horned sneri * in the arena."

"Perhaps," gibed one of the young ans nobles slyly, "we might even match rese, them against one of the—what were but they called?— 'Earthmen', when we

capture the creatures."

And all laughed. Gary wondered
what form that laughter would take
were these carefree young noblemen to
learn the truth about their captors.

"And the girls, I suppose, go to---"
began still another speaker.

Moranu nodded. "Yes, of course."
"Too bad," murmured one of the

younger noblemen regretfully. "The pale one I could use myself." "The gold fleshed one for me,"

"The gold fleshed one for me," chuckled another.

"That's right," growled Lark between clenched teeth. "Talk it over. One day I'll make you eat each other's tongues."

"Who could not?" asked Moranu.
"But we can afford to be magnanimous
this once, and surrender them to our
brother. After his long privations he

deserves a little relaxation."

THUS they came to the gates of the Palace Royal, a city within a city, a citadel within an armed camp, the innermost fortress of fortified Khundru. And it was here their little group was broken up.

As they passed within the gates the nobles dismounted, surrendering their beasts to grooms, and Moranu designated the direction to which each slave should be taken,

"The old man to the control tower. Tell Vesalu to set him to work. The "Course and soort; wild bests of Magor, The first is somewhat similar to the extinct "subsert toothed tiger" of Barth, recept that it is eggest with a stony canquec; the second is a gigantic linand with poisonous mobile borns.—82. girls to the baths, then to the seragilo of adornment, then to await our brother's pleasure. The men— Well, for the present quarter them with the

palace help. Áway with you now."

Thus callously were the five members of a family separated. Gary and
Lark were placed in the charge of a
young lieutenant who led them through
a maze of corridors heneralt the citadel towards the servants' quarters. As
they followed him Gary asked meekly,
"Your pardon, sire, but you spake of
Exramus', or creatures of some such
name. What are these? Fierce beasts
we must meet in the Arena?"

The subaltern chuckled. "Earthmen... fierce bants! That's good!
No, slave. They are puny creatures from afar who recently dared attempt to storm our planet. They were driven being made for them. It being made for them. It they are found, I promise you rare enjoyment at the Games. For they are stupid, weaking creatures. It should be anusting to watch you carve them to

bits during the Games."

"And," asked Gary in simulated eagerness, "our mates—when will we see them again?"

The garrulous young lieutenant grinned. "Oh, hy and by, I suppose. When our brother to whom they are being loaned for a little while wearies of them. You see, he has heen journeying afar quite a while, and is in need of relaxation. It was he who returned but a day ago to warn us of the invasion of these Earthmen—"

It was fortunate that as he spoke the young subaltern did not happen to look at the faces of his two charges. For at his words, both Lark and Gary stiffened, their eyes met in wild surmise. Then Gary spoke for both.

"And -- and the name of this noble

kraedar?" he asked

The nobleman laughed curtly. "I do not see that is concerns you, seri. But there is no harm in telling you whose august presence your mate will be permitted to attend. It is our brother, lately returned from tiny Gog.

The great and noble kraeder Borisa. CHAPTER XIX

Deadlock

"BORISU!"

There is a limit to which human impassivity can be constrained. Gary Lane had now surpassed his ability to play the ignoramus. The name burst from his lips with explosive force. "Borisul!"

O'Day echoed the cry. "Borisu! But my God, Gary, that means—" In his dismay Lark spoke in English. Their captor had been startled enough

at Gary's cry, but upon hearing speech in a foreign tongue from the lips of a supposedly uncultured slave, his eyes opened wide in astonishment. He demanded, "What is this? Whence came you twain that you speak a language I do not know?"

And his hand reached for the ray gun at his belt. But it never got there. For Lark O'Day called signals in a language the Magogean could never possibly understand. He cried sharply: "All right, Gary, punt formation ... One, two ... Hep!"

And simultaneously the two Earthmen converged on their guard, one high, one low. Garry, taking his cue from Lark's quarterbacking, made no effort to wrest the weapon from the Magogean's grasp, but kicked straight and true at the young lieutenant's wrist. The gun flew high, and by the time it.

clattered to the paving Lark had

smashed the young kracdar to the

ground and battered him into unconscious submission. Gary tugged at his friend's shoulder.

"OO, Lark, that'll do. You don't have to pound him into hamburger."

"Not hamburger," rasped O'Day, withdrawing reluctantly, "just a reasonable facsimile thereof. He's the

louse who said he wouldn't mind making a play for Penny himself!"

Gary said, "Never mind that now. Somebody's going to make worse than a play for Penny if she and Nora are ever taken before Borisu. You know

what that means, don't you?" Lark nodded grimly, "Taps for the

bunch of us. He's the one person in Khundru who could recognize any of us beneath our disguises. And by the time the gals get tidied up- Well,

what'll we do?" Garv said, "I've got an idea. You're about that guy's build--" He nodded toward the prostrate figure, "Scramble into his uniform, quick. Before somebody happens along this way. And

while you're dressing, I'll roll him into your rags." "00. The shift was made. Finally a "slave"

lay prone in the middle of the corridor floor, and a handsome young kraedar of the Magogean guard towered above

"OQ," repeated Lark then, "What next, director?"

"You must have something on you," figured Gary, "with which to call help. Find it."

Lark pawed the unfamiliar paraphernalia with which his uniform was draped, finally discovered a small whistle. He looked at it distastefully, "You mean I have to put this in my mouth

and blow it?" "Yes. Go ahead."

"I'll probably get hydrophobia," grunted Lark . . . but obeyed.

THE whistle brought immediate results. Footstens clattered through the tunneled corridor, and shortly ques-

tions were beings hurled at the false guard officer by an excited handful of Magogean soldiery.

"I was taking these two slaves to their quarters," explained Lark, "That one is a trouble maker. He turned against me. I was forced to strike him

down. Cart him away. Throw him in the dungeon. You-" He picked out a likely looking prospect Gary's size -"come with me while I take this other

where he must go." So, as the hand of soldiers lugged their unconscious kraedar into durance

vile. Lark and a soldier escorted Gary to the first conveniently dark passageway. From this came shortly a thud, as of some blunt instrument striking a heavy object , . . and a few moments

later two warriors clad in the habiliment of the Magagean armed forces were speeding upward through the labyrinthine corridors of the Palace Royal toward those chambers to which the girls had been taken.

They had ascended three levels and reached the point in the Palace Royal where the corridors were beginning to look less like passageways of a fortress and more like the aisles and avenues of a residential area when there burst about their ears a cascade of sounds at once bewildering and startling. It was the clamor of a myriad of ringing bells, sharp warning tocsins sounding an alarum of some sort. Whence it came, at first they could not tell. Searching for an explanation, their eyes discovered a series of grilled openings periodically spaced about the wainscoting

of the chambers through which they hurried Gary guessed, "A general communi-

cating system of some sort, Lark. But what does it mean? Do you think Borisu has seen the girls, discovered—"
"He's hardly had time," demurred
Lark, "But something's up—no doubt
about that. Ah! Here comes someone. Perhaps now—" He lifted his
voice in a shout as a soldier clad like
Gary raced into the corridor, "Hello

there, you!"

The Magogean warrior identified the rank of his accoster and halted, saluting. "Yes, kraedar? Foot soldier Norad, preparing to take post, sir, in accordance with emergency alarm in accordance with emergency alarm in

structions,"
"Very good," approved Lark, "What
is the nature of the emergency? Have
you any idea?"

THE private nodded. "Yes, sir. An official telecast was just issued over the diaphragm. It is a Gogean attack."

"A Gogean—?"
"Well, not exactly an attack, sir ...
yet. Because the force barrier prevents their entering Khundru. But a
mighty army of the cursed Darksiders

. . . very good, soldier. Report to your post as ordered. Oh, what is your post?"

"Main control tower, sir. The ultrawave cannon,"

"Indeed?" Lark's eyes lighted sharply. "And where lies this tower?" "Why, at the lowest level, of courses is—"began the transit", then stopped abruptly, suspicion darkening to the lowest level, of courses in the stopped abruptly, suspicion darkening to gaze. His voice classifed tone and one hand crept furtively toward the sideam holstered at his side. "But—but how is it that you a knuclear, do not know—"o

"That," said Lark softly, "is a ques-

"tion you must ask your ancestors, trad mir." And his hand, too, streaked to this belt. Before the startled warrior could draw, a shaft of orange lightning is seared the life from his body. It was a charred carcass when it hit the floor. Gary said regretfully. "Poor devil! He was only doing his duty as he saw it."

"War," reminded Lark, "is war. The only good enemy is a dead enemy. We know where we stand now. The Gogeans are on deck as they promised to be, and we know where the control tower is. Now if we can just lift that bar-

"We must get the girls first," reminded Gary. "I think we're almost

minded Gary. "I think we're almost there. Come on." He was right. They sped through a

few more chambers, then emerged intotaley furan apartment more elaborately furnished than any seen so far. Into this they shouldered rudely. At sight of these a gross figure, a mountainous mass of jelly parodying Magogean manhood, came mincing up to them on swollen feet entiting shrill little bleats of borror and dismay. "Kroeder! Tremin' A thousand

pardons, but these are the women's quarters. You have no right here."

"Beat it, capon!" grunted Lark, and with a twist of his foot sent the piping eunuch sprawling. He lifted his voice. "Penny! Nora! Where are you?"

At his cry a flurry sounded from an adjacent chamber as curtains flung apart and Penny and Nora ran to greet them. They still wore the peasant rags in which they had been sold. Penny cried, "Lark! We knew you'd

find us! We knew you would come!" And Nora echoed, "We were waiting, But Gary, what does the alarm mean? When they heard it, those who were attending us fied. All the women in Khusdru have taken shriter—"

iective.

"And every man has gone to his post," explained Gary. "They've spotted the Gogean army outside the city. We must work fast before they can turn their armaments on our unprotected friends. Come on."

"Yes, but where?"
"To the control tower. It's the key
to the whole situation."

THIS time their flight through the avenues of the Palace Royal was not so unimpeded as before. The entire city had sprung to a state of alert. As they left the residential quarters and moved once more into that portion of the citadde which was its walled fortress, they passed on several occasions small bodies of troors burrien toward

designated battle posts. As they passed gun stations they saw artillery crews huddled behind flame guns and rotors which, through slits in the palace wall, commanded wide areas of the city before and below. Twice their passage was challenged. Once by a patrol sentry whom Lark easily satisfied.

"Kraedar Gorilu and one attendant on special duty. Taking these two females to the dungcons for safekeep-

females to the dungeons for safekeeping."
"Very good, sir," said the sentry, and permitted them to pass.
But the second challenge was not so

easily averted. This came from a kroedar of equal rank to him as whom Lark masqueraded. This noble made the fatal error of attempting to question the fugitives without first calling assistance. "Kraedar Gorilu?" be repeated. "I

know no such lord. And your trappings designate you as one of the inner Palace Guard. Why, then, are you deeing in this direction? And why are you drawing that gun, kraedar?"

"Because," answered Lark simply, "you ask too damn many questions, and we haven't got time to answer them. Sorry, pal!"

And they left the inquisitive kraedar behind, inquisitive and suspicious no longer . . .

But finally they went again to that section of the Palace Royal which they knew to be its nerve center. From the deepening throb of many motors, and by the slowly increasing static crackling of dynamos endlessly turning, they knew when they had reached their ob-

But there was something missing. Something which puzzled and worried Gary Lane. So much so that as they approached the central control tower he drew his companions to a halt in the shadow of a deserted lookout niche

"Wait a minute," he warned. "Let's stop and look this situation over. There's something wrong here."

"Wrong" repeated Lark. "What's wrong about it? Everything looks OQ to me. We got this far without trouble—well, much, that is. And judging by appearances, that doorway—" He nodded—"opens to the control tower

proper. So far as I can see there's not a damn soul around to stop us."
"That's just it! This is the nerve center of the entire Magogean defense system. Look . . . look below, there!"

Gary gestured to the window slit by which they were huddled. Through it could be seen the lower court of the Palace Royal and several streets of Khundru beyond. All had been emptied of vehicular traffic and were asswarm fightling men prepared to repel any invasion attempt. "They've got her Palace guarded to the hilt. v. but the main control tower doesn't have a man around MI?"

Lark chuckled cheerfully. "Just like the Magogeans. Dr. Kang's been saying all along they don't have good

sense. So much the better for us. Come

on . . . let's get going. We've got to open that barrier.

"Well, all right," agreed Gary. "But be careful. I don't like this."

- c mumi

nressure.

SO THEY crossed the last open space between their present post and the partially isolated control tower, a domed minaret of a building constructed within the palace walls but remote from other portions of the

edifice.

Serving to strengthen Gary's suspicions, the door of this tower was not even locked, but yielded readily to their

Within this dome the thrumming drone of motors sounded more insistent than ever. It throbbed in their ears, their brains, their veins, like the slow and deadly dripping of a creeping polson. It was an audible magnet which drew them to the innermost chamber. And here again—stumingly!—was

And here again—strainingly:—was the door unlocked! Its latch clicked at Gary's pressure. The heavy door swing slowly open, and a bright room yawned before them; a tremendous, vaulted chamber in which were mounted gigantic instruments of almost unguessable size and nower.

The control panels governing these instruments were set on high walls, but as they entered Gary saw that a single figure, garbed in smock and apron of laboratory white, head enzaced in a used by wedlers, sufficed to keep all this intricate paraphernalia in working order. This single technician was dartting back and forth before his control banks, here touching a vernier, there readjusting a rheostat, elsewhere developed the control of th

At sight of this single lab man, O'-Day's exultation could no longer be restrained. With a gleeful cry he charged

to into the room, handgun drawn and menacing. His voice cried in swift But command. "All right, you at the controls there! Turn around, and put your hands up—Up. I said!"

your hands up—Up, I said!"

And then—too many things happened at once! There came a sudden

gasp from Penny's lips.

"Lark! It's—"

And a friehtened scream from Nora

And a frightened scream from Nora Powell. Metal clanged noisily as the great door clanged behind the four invaders. A bolt thick as a man's arm jurred into place. And even as the four whirled to comprehend this phenomenon, an all too horribly familiar voice represented O'Dav's order.

"Yes, my foolish friends—hands up and drop your weapons to the floor! What delayed you? I have been waiting for you quite some time."

And from behind the concealment of the now-closed door, flanked by a detail of Magogean warriors, armed to the teeth and ready for instant action, stemed Borisu!

"A TRAP!" cried Gary Lane. "A trap!"

Borisu smiled easily. "Yes, my dear young doctor. You did not believe that

we of Magog were stupid enough to purposely leave unprotected our control tower? Particularly when we knew you had contrived entry to our capital city?"

Nora Powell cried, "Then you knew we were in Khundru?"

"Let me not assume undue credit," smirked Borisu in mock modesty. "Let us say, rather, I guessed it was you the moment I learned one of our younger kreeder had been attacked, and his uniform exchanged for the garment of a

"When upon further investigation it was learned that this self-same 'serf,' in company with four of his pretended 'family,' had created a scene of violence at the slave market, it was not hard to guess that such impetuous blunderers must be part of the late

comradeship of the Liberty."

His manner changed abruptly, his oily smile disappeared and tiny needles of flame darted from his eyes, "But enough of this," he rasped. "There are but four of you here. Where is the fifth? Who was he? Muldoon? Or that young traitor patrolman, Captain

Gary stared at him in frank astonish-

ment. This did not make sense. Was it not to this control tower that Dr. Kang had been sent? If Borisu and his henchmen had not already met and anprehended the Martian savant here, then where--?

A sudden thought struck him, one so suggering that it was only with an estort that he kent his eyes from turning in a revelatory direction. He strugaled to keep his voice under control He asked levelly, "And suppose I retuse to tell you. Borisu?"

"It will not greatly matter,' snarled the Magogean, "But I warn you, it will be better if you do tell. Speak, now! Who was the fifth member of

your party?22 "The fifth member," said Gary slowly, stalling for what he had reason to believe was precious time, "was-"

Then came an interruption. The bonded technician at the control board turned suddenly, spluttering swift, fearful words at the kraedar and his

guards. "My lords! Your attention quickly! Something has gone wrong with

the force barrier!" "Wrong?" echoed Borisu, turning swiftly to the man. But nothing can

go wrong. What do you mean?" 'It's weakening . . . failing . . .

Come, see for yourself."

The technician pointed with trembling fingers at an alarm signal high upon the control banks; a light now pulsating in fitful ruby flores. Borisu spat a stream of anery curses, turned and waddled bastily across the amphitheatre to the engineer's side.

"Where is the fault?" he demanded wildly, "Hurry, man! Bestir vourself! Don't stand there like a stricken schoolgirl. Do something!"

And: "Very well, Borisu!" cried the engi-

neer, his voice changing suddenly. "I will do something!"

His band leaped out and tore the pistol from the kracdar's grasp, in one split second completely changing the

"Down on your face, and keep your arms outstretched above your head! Tell your men to throw their weapons away."

situation

CHAPTER XX

The Last Treachery

KANG!" The name burst from Lark O'Day's lips.

"Quickly!" crisped the Martian scientist, "Pick up their guns! Daughter-" As Lark and Gary and Nora

scrambled to the task of collecting the astonished Magogeon's fallen weapons. Kang directed his attention to Penny "you will find my former slave apparel in that curboard. Tear it to strips and bind our enemy."

"Bind him?" demanded Lack, "Why waste good rags on a scoundrel like that? I know a better way to take care of-10

"No!" commanded Dr Kanz "We will need him to transmit our peace term to the Massessans when our affect has a flooded the city."

"And these others?" Lang said "The states class over there. Throw them into it and lock the door. There is no reason to occasion useless bloodshed. These soldiers have committed no crime but that of obeying orders." "Okay," said Lark, "You're run-

ning the show." He berded together the now helpless and sadly bewildered half dozen Magogean guards, and thrust them into the cubicle pointed out by the scientist.

When the door was secured behind them....

"But how did you manage to get con-

trol of this chamber?" asked Nora Powell. Kang shrugged. "It was very simple. There was but one man watching these panels when I was brought here; the technician whose garments

I wear. He expected no trouble from an elderly slave. And since we two were alone-well, it seemed an elementary precaution to don his clothes before I began the necessary operations," "And the barrier?" inquired Gary

eagerly. "You have lifted it yet?" "Not yet. I had first to make a few alterations in the Magogean machinery I wanted to make sure a

entered. My work is now complete. And so-"

Kang turned to the panels. His hands tueged at a single gigantic switch.

No light glowed. There came no change in the humming sound that permeated the control room. The adventurers looked at Kang and at each other anxiously. Penny spoke for all when she asked, "You are sure, O my father, that the barrier is open?"

Kang said, "See for yourself," And be pressed a stud which lighted a vision screen before them.

What they saw left little doubt as to

the effectiveness of Kang's accomplishment. For the screen reflected one segment of the imperial city's surrounding wall, a location which had been a gate in Khundru's defenses. But now that sentry post existed no more. It was a mass of broken kindling trampled under the rushing feet of hordes of Gogeans who had burst from their place of ambush to storm the city.

THIS is one spot, Kang," cried Gary excitedly. "And elsewhere?"

"Elsewhere," repeated Kang, "it is the same." He spun the dial which moved the

telelens of the vision screen at a 360° arc about Khundru. Everywhere they looked it was the same. Tsalnor of Gog had placed bis troops cunningly, entirely encircling the city. To the north and south, divisions had crossed the chasmed mounts to take their posts outside the barrier. Now in two wedges they were storming Khundru's primary defense line toward the central citadel. The marine detail, which had completely bipassed the capital to reach the shoreline, was now swarming up yet another avenue of Khundru from the power failure would not cause the bardocks and wharves which they had rier to fall before all our allies had seized. These three formed diversionary forces, hammering at the flanks and rear of the Magogeans, who were forced to concentrate their main defense on the eastern front: that which faced the Twilight Zone out of which the bulk of the Gogean army was pour-

> So swift was the movement, so bectic the opening phases of that battle, that it was only in fitful glimpses one could comprehend the magnitude of what was going on. Afterward Gary Lane recalled having briefly glimosed Tsalnor himself riding at the fore of a cavalry detail hewing its way through broken ranks of fleeing Magogeans up to the

citadel proper. In another sector, whether vards or miles away it was hard to tell, he saw for an instant Flick Muldoon, wild-eved and jubilant, in command of a foray squad busily opening a new breach in the fading Magogean defenses. Little Herby Hawkins fought beside Flick, and though no sound transmitted itself over the vision plate, the watchers could almost bear the voice of the little cockney raised in

loyful battle ery. "Blimey, wot fun, ch? Wot bleedin' iun!"

How long the battle raged was hard to tell. Certainly long enough to place on pins and needles Gary and Lark both of whom, as they watched the scenes depicted about them, chafed with impatience to fight at their comrades' sides. But this Dr. Kang sternly forbade, and gave good reason.

"No, not vet! As we have seen, it should be easy for our allies to take the outer city. The real difficulty will come when they try to storm the Palace Royal. We must wait until that mo-

ment then take from within," "From within?" echoed Lark, "But

"This is how we will use him," Kang nedded toward the trussed Borisu who lay smouldering with impotent rage upon the floor. "This chamber is the beart of all Magogean apparatus; not only their barrier shield and vision screens but their intercommunicating system as well. When the proper moment comes we shall visiplate him throughout the entire ralace, and make him order his countrymen to lay down their arms."

"Order them, yes," grunted Lark, "But will they do it? That's another mestion."

When a little revenely, "They will do it. They are not like our people. They are a rave trained through long

ages to obedience. But if they don't-" "If they don't --?"

"Then," continued Kang soberly, "having given them their chance, we shall destroy them ruthlessly and without mercy."

ALL present knew what he meant For that, too, was part of the plan which had been arranged in conference with the Gogeans. Noticeably absent from those who now stormed the city was Captain Hugh Warren and his crew of Space Patrolmen. They, Gary knew, were even now waiting aboard the Liberty with motors idling ready to lift at an instant's notice to soar

over the capital. With their own fleet grounded, if the Magogeans would not listen to reason the Liberty's guns would bathe Khundru in such a flood of fury and destruction as had never before been witnessed 1

Thus it was with a sense of increasing triumph the Solarites watched the battle for Khundeu turning more and ever more in favor of the invaders, More swiftly with each pa-sing moment the defenders move way, retreating to the shelter of their palace walls. Walls which, though they did not know it. were a fateful trap for themselves.

And at last, save for monoing-up operations carried on by small bands of Gogeans in outlying sections of the city, the first stage of the battle was ended. All surviving soldiers of Magog had taken refuge in the Palace Royal. there to withstand siene

And siege, they now discovered to their horror, it most certainly was! For when, assailed by the weapons of their enemies, they attempted to retaliate by loosing their royn destructive ray can son arous the attachers, their artiflerymen learned that the cannon were not in operation! These were not, like the smaller hand weapons, self-charging, but were powered by direct cable from the control tower. And the control tower was in the hands of the adversaries!

It was then, with the battle stalled briefly at a deadlock, Dr. Kang nodded. "Now," he said, "is our time. Bring him here."

Gary hauled Borisu to his feet, prodded the bleating Magogean forward. Kang addressed him bluntly.

ward. Kang addressed him bluntly.

"You have heard what you must do?"

"Never!" cried Borisa, blustering
defiance. "Never will I betray my

people!"
"It is written," said Kang quietly,
"'Only the fool rejects the inevitable.'
You are no fool, Borisu. Will you pro-

You are no fool, Borisu. Will you proclaim an armistice? Or for stubborn pride will you winness the destruction of your empire?"

Borisu blubbered, "Better to go down

norms humbered, "Better to go down fighting than abjectly. If I bid my pooled lay down their arms, your hordes will sweep in and destroy them." "That," Kang assured him, "they will

not do. In conference we have already discussed this with the Gogoans. Much have our two races to hate yours for, Borisu. Theirs for years of life-indeath in the darkling wastes of Magog; ours for impelling upon us centuries of prenature death and a dwindling doom.

"Even so, we will not sow the seeds of new conflict in the peace of the old. Lay down your arms in peaceful surrender and 1 offer you the pledge of itso worlds that about the conference table shall be reasoned the merits of a new and lasting peace for all concerned."

"And if I do not?" demanded Borisu "Then," Kaug promised him, "you shall surely die. And as for your city—" He paused and gestured toyerd the visionplate. Words were newfless in the face of that which might

there now be seen. The silver tube of the Liberty, shimmering faintly in the atmosphere of Magog, surrounded with its imposentable fore-shield, flying sucoming to seed to rest directly over the citatel "There is your answer, Borius. The decision is yours. There is little time in which to make it. Speak, or—"

AND Borisu capitulated. With a grinding cry, he reached for the disphragm Kang offered him. The Martian dector depressed a series of studs, and instantaneously, in a thousand the control of the series of studs, and instantaneously, in a thousand the whole of the Palace Royal, there appeared on vision plates before the started eyes of all the plate before the started eyes of all the magnetic him who was a Braderia supreme in the Inverted the study of the started of Magoge. And they leared a series of the started of the series of the started of the started

"Brothers of Magog, lay down your arms! About our city are entreuched our Gogens fors. Above our citade howers a vessel which, if we do not surrender, will blast us all to atoms. Your guns, as you have learned, are useless. The foe has overthrown our might. Surrender!"

The vision plate went dead. Throughout the whole of the Palace Royal a murmuring arose. Men lifted from concealment, and doors once barred were opened as a race trained to obedience followed the instructions of a superior. The battle of Magog was ended.

DAYS before, hours before, even short minutes age, Gary Lane had hated this little man who stood beside him. Had wished nothing more than an opportunity to meet him face to face, and crush the life from his reachecons little healy. But a victor can affeed to be unagoneimous. And now, in this powers of triumph, Gary faced it has less least to feel commissestion for any who, through he fought to distorted crots, had seen his empire fall before a larger, charter force.

He terrari to Bocket, and as a quiet visce the sort, Which there, Borisa. You have my please, with that of Dr. Kring, that you shell not regret this move. There will be no challicity and in the power trans we offer. Only justice and careffer, for all. No more warring be-

tween our worlds."

Name said simply, "Yes, Berisa, you are free." And be moved close to the fifth man to cat the strips of cloth which is on a d bis welsts. A knife thought briefly, and tissue.

"Hather!" screened Penny, "Father,

Her words some drawned in a roar of tree in Corre affering behavedly, was vision in the last well wrappened in the extent like her well wrappened in the extent like branch had been stricten the little man's hunds derived like serpents, territing the knife in Kang's hand and thoustate froward with all like strengths.

East granted other heavily, then shoped forward, homis clutching futility at a hings which shop half buried in the site. From between his classifufances sought lady rivulets of crimson

Now was this all, in the same flushing near the latter smooth a repided for the initial subject to belt turned to father increase upon those who toget to duri him. The mad voice ray in paral command.

"Back: Back, all of you or I will

f-ray you down like dogs. Victory, eh?" in His laughter cackled shrilly. "Your it moment of triumph? We shall see?"

His tiny eyes darting from one to institute of them to denet any slightest meetion, he backed all the way across the room to where stood the most pondarous of all the machines in that control tower. A giosnife tube sternomded by gleanning coils and fridescent busbars. A hune, revolving drum of an

instrument whose purpose Gary did not know.

Burise left him not long in doubt.
Still mouthing the tounts and curses of a ball-demented man, he clamthered to a mixed platform on this marchine.

leosed a panel, and dug lib free hand somewhere deep into its entrails. "So," he mocked, "you have won vic-

tary? But out of your victory you shall drink only the dregs of deepest defeat! You and all your cersed universe!"

Kang, who had lain as one dead where he had been stricken now stirred.

and lifted his head dracelly. His eyes, terming slowly, so ught and found Burisu, then widened in horror. He tried to speak, but his voice was a thick, mumble; his words were punctuated by tiny streamers of blacel that leaked from the currency of his mouth,

"That . . . machine! Don't . . let

him . . . fough it!"

Borisu's quick dure darted to the

dying tran. He hughed stridently.

"Then you are not dead yet, my good doctor? You barbarians take a lot of killing. Well, I shall not finish the job.
I south profer that you should live leng enough to watch, with your econades, the vengeance of Borisa."

HE imaged souldenly, and sometiming came large in his hand. Wires, Confecting wires of some sort. Instantly the low thrum which has summed flavours the control counter.

began to heighten. The tone crept higher up the tonic scale. Something within the machine Borisu had damaged was beginning to move faster and faster.

"You dog!" grated Lark O'Day.
"You filthy, conniving scoundrel! I'm
coming after you, I'll break your neck
with my bare hands if it's the last

thing L-"
"Back, cossis!" searled Borisu. "I assure you—take another step toward and it will be the last thing you ever do. You see this object I hold in my hand?" He dangled a bit of metal before them taunting, "Too are spate trained men. Do you recognize it? It is a governor. Ah, yes! A small governor controlling the speed of the instrument upon whose platform I now

stand.

"Until this moment the machine has always operated at an inexorable and never-changing rate. But no more. From this moment henceforth the machine will galn speed... and speed... and speed... and speed...

a shrill cackle, "And you know what that means, my friends?"

that means, my triends?"

O'Day said stoutly, "I know it means your death, Borisu. Here and now, or elsewhere and later, but surely your

death." "Perhaps so," laughed the diminutive *Perhaps so," laughed the diminutive *raedar. "But more than that... it means the swift and final death of your universe. For this on which I stand, gentlemen, is the instrument we of Magog have for years been playing upon your system. The ultrawave cannon! And now I have speeded its action to such an extent that the length of your world's existence may be measured in longer in weeks or monthsured no longer in weeks or months-

A pang of fear drove deep into Gary's heart. Mad the little man might be, but staring into his red-rimmed eves

6 Gary knew he spoke the truth. The g ultrawave cannon, speeded a thousandfold, was hurling its destruction ungoverned upon a universe which even now was dwindling to the breaking point?

point:

This then was the end of their adventure. It did not matter that they
t had come afar and conquered many
hazards. Here at the last moment, with
It triumph within their grasp, was to be
t torn from them all for which they had
fought and labored and—his eyes

sought Dr. Kang—and died.
What if their mission were a success
and Magog's power overthrown, the
children of God returned once more to
look upon the sun? The children of
Earth within a matter of hours would
be a horrendous bolocaust of flame, but
would to observers, from this far vastness seem no more than the flickering
of a momeratry candle in lost dis-

na-tances.

He cried in a choked voice, "Borisu!
in Stop! For God's sake..."

BUT his plea dangled unfinished. For at that moment a miracle transpired before his eyes. Dr. Kang, who should ere now have been dead, with some superail defort had not only raised his head. .. but was slowly, labortoudy, rising to his feet. He stood there for a moment, swaying dangerously, his knees half buckled beneath hin, his eyes already glazed. And again his ling parted in that thick and blood-spumed parted; in that thick and blood-spumed that the contract of the stood of the

mumble.
"Borisu, turn off... that ... gun!"
"The doctor," mocked Borisu, "is
hardy! The doctor is courageous. But
the doctor is also a fool. Stop this
gun? Never! Not until your world
has met the oblivion it deserves. Not
until—Wait! Stand back there you
too!!

106

Stand back! Anah!"

The ravgun in bis hand gusbed a livid flame as Kang, tightening his worn, exhausted body for one final effort, pitched forward convulsively. The random shot missed the old man, and

Borisu screamed a cry like that of a stricken animal, as in a last futile moment he realized Kang's intention. Kang, already living on borrowed time, was yet the scientist. He alone.

and must be done. He alone, of all those who stood helplessly trapped, was

close enough to do it Three strides he stumbled forward . . . then Borisu's second blast caught him squarely in the chest. If he should have been dead before, he was surely so now, But it did not matter. Under-

standing had come too late to the madman of Mingog. For sheer impetus carried Kang's body forward to that which Kang had planned. His body plunged full length and sprawling upon the gleaming bushars of the wave cannon. There burst from Borisu's lips a last and frightful scream. The atmosphere crackled. For a moment the biting oder of ozone was horribly mingled with the channel stench of searing flesh

"Down!" roared Gary. "Down on the floor, for God's sake! Short circuit_!"

As one, the watching four fell flat on their faces just as the gigantic machine before them, quivering and trembling to its very roots, rocked itself from its moorings . . . and in a rearing fountain of flame exploded into a million fragments!

CHAPTER XXI

"Journey's End . . . "

"CO," SAID Tsalnor regretfully, "you will not change your mind? You will not stay?"

Gary Lane shook his head. "No. Tsalnor. Someday we may return. But now our duty is to go to our own system, there tell them what we have

here learned." Tsalnor nodded. "Yes, man uff

Earth, I suppose that is best. But you will send others uff your people to see us? You will teach us, as you promised, your method uff travel? That of all in the room, had seen what could there may be friendship and amity be-

tween the people uff our worlds?" "We will," pledged Gary Bryant bas said that now the ultrawave cannon is destroyed the solar universe will not only stop its dwindling but will

indeed, begin to return to the true and greater universe from which it was exiled "But before this happens our races

will have forged bonds of friendship so close that when Sol returns to take its place amongst its sister stars there need never again be war between our worlds." Muldoon said, "And you, Tsalnor,

you've got an even more important job than we have. Keeping the Magogeans under control. You've got to see to it that they never try to build another one of those cannon." Tsalnor said softly, "We shall be

careful. But I think we need never again fear the construction uff such a weapon. The kraedars of Magon bave been overthrown. It was never the common people who conspired against us. When we half taught them the benefits of freedom and democracy. they too shall take their place in a new and better universe."

A bell clanged in the control turret of the Liberty, and Captain Hugh Warren, seated in the pilot's swivel, turned to his friends. "Well, I'm nimid that's the signal. All ashore that's going ashore "



Tsalnor and his retinue left. A few minutes later the Liberty was once again tenanted only by those making the return trip to the solar universe. To an Earth free now forever of the

dangers which had threatened it. Dr. Bryant sighed. "And so," he said, "begins the long fourney home," "Only," grinned Lark O'Day, "it

won't be such a long journey. We've got the Jovians' quadridimensional coordinates for a space warp that will

drop us a couple of hours from Earth. All set over here, Hugh." "Right!" Warren called from his

banks. "All right, folks, here we go!" And he depressed the green stud. Lark rose, "Leaving me," he drawled, "with nothing to do for the next couple of hours. Unless," he spoke to Pen-N'hi hopefully, "unless

maybe you'd like to take a little stroll out on the observation deck?" "Yeah." chuckled Flick, "and watch the fourth dimension whizzing by? That ought to be a lot of fun, Miss

Penny." "It all depends," chuckled Warren, "on who you're watching it with. I was just about to suggest something of the same sort. How about it, Nora? Suppose you and I-"

RUT Gary interrupted him. This was a new and different Gary Lane

from the curt young man who, for months past, had been too preoccupied with a life-and-death struggle to pay a proper amount of attention to matters which were a part of his personal and private life.

Gary said, "Oh, no you don't, Hugh! Not so fast. I got here first." He reached out and folded the arm of Nora Powell into his own, He said, "Nora

and I have a few matters to discuss. Business matters," The girl looked at him astonished.

"B-business, Gary? At a time like thishusinees?

Gary said seriously, "Very important business that has been delayed altogether too how. A-a matter of a merger, you might say." Nora sighed. Whether it was with

relief, or whether there was in that sigh a hint of acquiesence to follow was hard to tell. But she smiled and nodded. And: "In that case," she said, "I have no

choice. I have to do what my boss tells me, Hugh. I'll go with you, Gary." And they left the bridge.

Muldoon snickered, "Business!" he snorted, "Business my hat! Biological business, if you ask me!" And Warren shook his head deject-

edly. "Oh, well," he shrugged. "What the hell! Somebody's got to stick around to drive the ship" marine is a gadget. But it also has a ghost ship in



(Continued from 6116 6. Rush On Callisto" which shouldn't mislend you . . . it's a gold rush, all right, but not like other gold rusber. Odd tales all, and you'll enjoy 'em.

WITH "Periscope Prey" we were stuck. We didn't know if it was science fiction or fantass. It has a godger in it-certainly a subsub try to torpedo a ship that didn't exist! Read it for yourself, and see what happened! LEE FRANCIS, newest addition to our writers' club, does "Daughter of Destiny". Once again a writer takes an old theme, that of the "only"

woman on Earth, and does it up brown. FEW words about the art work in this issue. A FRW wome nover on a Boad story is a natural, especially when it's a space scene. This is a space scene that ought to please you immensely. It looks swell to us.

H. W. McCauley took Lee Francis' story and disbed out with some mighty lowely stuff for interior illustrations—and for good measures, threw in two of 'em for one novelet, which is an extra homes. The Mac Girl's as good in black and white, as in color!

OUR iffustration on good enamel stock for this month's offering to you readers (at 15c) is on page 124 It filustrates "Valley of the Black Sun" and it's by Magarian. Only we have a point to make concerning these illustrations. We must wait for the original plate to come back from the printer before we can make the special reproductions, and we therefore must warm you that if there seems to be a delay in delivery, don't get anxious about it. Several of you, ordering previous proofs, have become concerned and written us. This forces us to answer, explaining the situation, and doesn't do much good besides wasting our time. So when you order, don't worry. Your cony will come to you as fast as the wheels will work!

THAT novel "Warrior of the Dawn" by Howard Browne, which appeared scribilly in AMARING STREET, will appear in book form in March. Many of our readers have asked us to inform them of this fact, so there you are. You can dash out and get a copy for your library. The story was tremendously successful in its initial publication and well worth preserving for future reacting by buying the book.

HOW would you like to have a couple of notice and age for brackfast? Of course you would a farm that has a feer ligit out, if the the caps to them and they'd edjoy it. At least fout is to the man of the least fout in the caps to the caps of the c

A ND now comes our "it's the bunk" department:
"I can tell a man's character just by looking

at him," is a common expression. The shape of the chin, the texture of the hirt, the contour of the fact, the texture of the hirt, the contour of the face, and the "spatkle" of the eyes are all supposed to be factors in judging men. Thus sands of employment offices but for photos graphs when people send in their applications work. What have scientific methods established in this field?

Photographs of a group of men who had been successful and a group who had been unsuccessful in their occupations were presented

to several "Judges of human character." These "judges" were told to pick those men that were successful and what vocation each had fol-

Thuse men faffed completely in their judgments They fulfed in charging the navancial foots and they falled in stating what occupation each "boo" followed. The general tendency of the radging group was to rate more "seccessfuls" from "unseccessfuls." After presentation of the results of the experiment, will further arrest that it is practitally impossible to product what soration a college amior should follow mends by looking at his photograph, nor is it possible to judge what vocation a man is pursuing who graduated from college several years before the picutie was taken Asked the basis for their Judgmunts, the unswenwere: "general unpersion", "htmch", "wrotheny to someone I know", and mention of specific facial features.

MAMMOTH DETECTIVE, our sister magame, has accretion stories in the life April issue on sale February 16. The base containsach names as William Merrian Roise, William such names as William Merrian Roise, William P. McGivers, Robert Leebe Belleva, Nelson S. Bond, W. T. Balland, H. C. Thomas, Staart Friedman, Richard Dermody, and neury offusa. It's easily a swell bunch of stories. 304 powe for a counter?

WITH that observation we step down from the telescope for this roughly and wend our wenty way toward another issue. Not too wenty, because we have a bunch of premising ma, to



"There's nothing wrong with you that a good can of oil won't fix!"

JUGGERNAUT JONES ...WARRIOR

By A. R. McKENZIE

"REVOLUTION ARY!"
I frowned, as the giant liner
INTERVOID thundered on
through space in its ridiculous attempt
to reach Altair. "A sales plan of mine
okayed before its inauguration."
I looked up and saw, to my horror, a
deed world of tremendous bulk bur-

tling out of the voidal wastes straight

for our bow. Bellowing a warning, I flung myself from the observation salon, across the hall and into the control room. No living thing was in evidence. A sign read: CAUTION: ROBOT PILOT IN

CAUTION: ROBOT PILOT IN OPERATION

"A mechanical failure!" I gasped. Flipping the soulless metal-and-wire contraption aside, I made a lightning



Trust Juggernaut Jones to see a market for his fliers on the most war-torn world in all the solar system—and do some fighting too!



All through the ages monsters and machines have battled on this world 111

mighty liner into an emergency starboard swing. Clouds of unoxidized methanized X-anthracite powder spued from the rocket tubes as the INTER-VOID went into an unexpected endover-end soin.

"Improperly calibrated controls," was my decision as I, the robot pilot and a discouraging amount of control room equipment landed en masse upon

the ceiling.

All of which was a hell of a mess and it was all happening because of a spacegram from my boss, back on Earth. He always gives me these easy jobs to pull off!

SPACEGRAM (Galactic Service)

T O: V. Parker Jones

Field Manager, Intersystem

c/o Spaceliner INTERVOID En Route Altair Planet System Message: Your proposed sales campaign on recently-contracted Planet A-8. Altair System sensational! Uncek Fliers, Inc. 100% behind daring plan to employ its demonstrator line of hypomagnesium atmospheric planes, which tollows you on treighter COMET-DUST, in an attempt to free englaved peoples of Planet A-8 . . . Warning: Commissar of Intersystem Relations recommends extreme caution. Situation critical. Conquering Mercus, now in control of A-8, believed waiting only an incident to launch annihilating attack across void against our entire system

Go get 'em, Juggernaut!

Harmon T. Dee

Manager Interplanetary Sales
New Chicago, Earth.

"HOP to it, Baldy!" Captain Bradley—an under-fed, sinister gendeman—said unpleasantly, thrusting me bodily into the knee-deep piles of unexploded fuel. "Here's your broom!" ' "This," I frowned, "is a rocket cham-

"This," I frowned, "is a rocket chamber."
"Exactiv. And you're gonna sweep

it." The INTERVOID's master grinned evilly. "We figured on killing you only nobody could invent a way brutal enough to do your crime justice. An end-over-end soin at too speed!"

An end-over-end spin at top speed!"

"But that gigantic dead world would certainly have—"

"Gigantic, he says! Two-ton, that was a five-foot hunk of stellar dust which the robot pilot was already shunting aside . . . God pity A-8 if this was a sample of your plan!" "Insulfing terms," I said, "like Two-

ton' are futile. Rival salesmen, jealous of my prowess, often utter such. My closest rival—an unscruptious Mr. Joe Karp who, before his fatal defeat in a competitive test of product beneath Mars' Sea of Piscar—even dubbed me

'Juggernaut' which, obviously, doesn't describe—"
"Stow it, Blubberpuss. What's this crazy plan you've got?"

"Does it matter? We won't reach Altair for generations." "What!"

"Altair," I said bravely, drawing a cigar from my pocket, "is upwards of 15 light years from our system. Nat-

urally-"

"Amazing! He's still figuring spacial distances with terrestrial math. Ignores completely the warps and distortions which are key factors in today's spacial trig. You jerk! A modern spaceline—without you abourd on rise Alair's system in thirty days. days late, having already been passed by that freighter COMETDUST which is cargoing those astinie magnetimburning planes you aren't going to demonstrate." "Are," I corrected.

"You. Mr. Jones, will be too busy sweeping rocket chambers." "Piracy!" I thundered.

"Tossing a blunder-blimp like you down on A-8 would be like shooting a spark across these electrodes while we're juside this methane-saturated chamber. Don't you know yet what the ticklish situation is on that particular planet?"

"A-8," I said, unwrapping my cigar, "has brenthable atmosphere. Its peoples, enslaved by a mysterious conqueror, only recently believed a call for help to our system. It is hoped our aiding them, secretly, will lead to better commercial relations."

"Incredible!" Captain Bradley whispered. "With our entire system threatened, he thinks of sales and those broken-down Unceks!"

"A Uneck Elier," I said sternly, clinping my eigar, "is not broken down Being rocket driven by high-octaned magnesium, whereas its closest rivalthe Inferior Globe Glider-relies on ground-contacting repulser rays for flight, a Uneek is able to soar freely over mountainous terrain and unevenbedded rivers. Further, because of its tremendous reserve nower, the added

weight of armor, guns and-" "So that's your plan! To sell re-

vamped Unseks for war!" 'You," I said darkly, reaching for my hypo-magnesium cigar lighter, "have spied upon the message I spaced

back to Harmon T. I shall take steps "Don't!" the man screamed

methane gas-2 I held firm, cigar lighter polyed-"Not even bribes will stop me. I shall

inform the authorities -- ' "Fire-damp!" Captain Bradley shricked as I pressed the "on" button

of the lighter.

"AD!" the creature said, staring through one lidless, phosphorescent eve set high on a turnin-shaped head. "What a waistline!" Its many-fingered hand suddenly tightened upon an ugly white spear. "You've got two eves!"

"Naturally," I said, facing the bloated, blue-skinned apparition courageously. The fact that my blistered ankles were chained to the cell wall did

not influence niv stand. "You," I said to this elephant-legged denizen of Altair's Planet A-8 upon which the INTERVOID has just landed, "waddled through that cell door without opening it. A ghost, perhaps?" "Onit screening, blast it. I'm no

ghost. I'm A-Lee, "The King of A-8?" I asked.

"King! Shucks, I'm only an army private. Drafted off the form just last week. It left my paw with eighty acres of humerus land-hey! You try-

ing to pull something, Bub?" "Not I," I scowled. "It's you!" "Me?"

"Certainly. I usually contact kings." The thought struck me. "Since your people, obviously, are not of human form, I should expect, considering the unusual turns this campaign is taking the fiends who hold you in bondage to be human in form. But that." I smiled

rubbing my coal-dust coated hands, "would be ridiculous." "You're nuts . . . But I'm rounding up stragglers." Private A-Lee's eve glowed a perplexed green. "You're

dark-skinned and fat like us, but you've got two eyes. You anything like the gang on this ship?" "That," I said, "is debatable. As a

salesman, I have been likened to cold, obstinate metal. Naturally, I knew a mixture of methane, coal dust and air explodes on contact with flame. But, apparently the robot gas detector had

failed in the chamber I was being forced to clean "

"You are one of our crowd!" Private A-Lee's eyes sparked an angry crimson. "Captured, tortured and forced to work! Bones, the situation is serious. Those skinny, white things can reason! They de-charged you, then chained you," He patted my shackles and they melted away. "C'mon, we've got to warn the sergeant." He vanished into the tel-iron door only to pop quickly back. "Forgot you were decharged, Here."

His hands patted a hole in the barrier, "Now let's travel!"

En route to the INTERVOID disembarking chamber, my agile brain whinned into action.

"He thinks I'm a native A-Sian." I thought, "because of this coal dust and my tremendous muscular development . . . Skinny, white things-Zounds! his conquerors are human in form. But, obviously, these A-Sian Blues haven't been taking their bondage seriously.

It's possible that only an incident of cruelty against a fellow citizen can jolt the isolationists into the rage needed to defeat their capable, aggressive

human-like conquerors." My part was crystal clear.

"As a native A-Sian," I said, "who has suffered agonies. I will arouse the

downtrodden masses to proper battlepitch." My sales plan, then, would take instant root. Unhampered by my un-

scrupulous rival, Mr. Joe Karp, I would become (1) liberator of A-8; (2) Savior of the solar system; (3) creator of an avalanche of orders to deluge Main Office

For hundreds of sturdy Uneeks, revamped to flying fortresses and liber-

ators, would blast the conquerors to oblivion.

AT THE ship's exit, a disheveled Captain Bradley was being held

erect by several turnip-headed A-Sians. "Intoxicated!" I shuddered and joined Private A-Lee outside.

A city of puffball buildings lay

around me. In every direction, far across a river-cut, pinkish countryside. a precipitous mountain range was sparkling under mighty Altair's seering rays. So high this range, I knew instantly not even Uneek's latest creation-a 22-jet, one-man sport airsledcould blast out of this vast crater. A smaller heavenly body, glinting a

weird metallic blue, hung to the east. Decades past, in 1919, a strange blue star had appeared suddenly in Aquila to fade rapidly. Perhaps this was that star, born of colliding bodies, with fragments digging craters like this on Altair's satellites. "The moon of mystery," I said sol-

emnly. Out at the crater-city's western outskirts, along which wriggled a wide,

silvery river, there was a clearing resembling an army encampment. On its parade ground rested another spaceshin

"The COMETDUST," I nodded. The freighter was trembling as though the pink ground beneath it was

being torn by quakes. "Heat waves," I decided. We had landed inside a park of white-boled trees from which drooped

long, silky foliage. Centered in this park, in the fashion of an earthen county-seat, was a squatty, domed structure. Lesser buildings, undoubtedly shops, were banked around the park with one pink-surfaced boulevard. jammed with antiquated wheeled vehicles, winding off to the west to cross

the river near the army camp.

Hundreds of people were crammed below me in the park area, many resembling Private A-Lee, but many more perfect replicas of my race. "The enemy! Pseudo-humans!" I gasped, then frowned.

White-skinned master and blue, oneeved slave were mingling freely. Indeed, only a few of the human-like monsters-those wearing odd, eggshaped helmets-showed any clannishness. Most of these were across the square, intent on something behind the courthouse.

But most bewildering was the unearthly stillness. Not even a cough rose from the multitude.

"This," I said, "is ridiculous. The Blues and Whites, save for a helmeted few, are practically arm-in-arm.

this customary?" "So far, yes," Private A-Lee confessed. "But when they hear ahout your mistreatment-Yow! I forgot to

report!" HE HUSTLED away. Silently. I recalled, then, I had not heard

his voice. Nor, I suddenly realized, had his lips moved. "Advanced ventriloquism." I decided and recoiled as a scratchy voice lifted from behind the courthouse where the helmeted pseudo-humans were col-

Iested. ". . . controls a child can master. Note these openings: mere pinpoints, yet from them shoot the unsurpassed motivating repulser rays. Remember: no noisy rocket tubes on a Glider to set fires on low-line flights No...."

A squad of Blue soldiery holted past me. Private A-Lee attached. "We're after the ring-leaders!" he

announced in his tricky, soundless delivery.

They plunged into the crowd. Following. I took two bouncing strides on rubberish ground, then trod upon a lumpish object.

"Elephant!"

A hrown-eved girl, with chestnut tresses tucked under a helmet, was ruhbing her foot vigorously.

"Elephant."

Again: no voice: no moving lips! Yet the picture of a giant pachyderm had flashed across my mind. I understood instantly. Aping the ventriloquistic art of a true A-Sian, this voluptuous fiend was craftily seeking to hinder me from carrying out my strata-

"A commendable effort," I murmured. "But futile. However, after I have saved A-8 and made my sales, perhaps we two could-"

But the girl, terrified by my lightning grasp of the situation burried away. I plunged on across the rubherish ground. The paunchy Blues were rapidly selzing all helmeted pseudohumans in sight but ignoring, for some reason, the fiend's stoic-faced, bareheaded brothers.

Rounding the courthouse, I saw, lined against a hedge which bore flowers shaped amazingly like the girlmonster's tawny eyes, a collection of atmospheric planes. An exceedingly thin gentleman-the same whose voice I had beard-was cringing against a ludicrous model which I instantly identified as Globe Glider's crude attempt to match Uneck's latest masterpiece-

the fast single-passenger 22-jet airsled. "Iuggernaut!" the wretch gasped. Mr. Joe Karp, then, had lived to fling

his inferior line of Glider demonstrators aboard the COMETDUST and heat the crippled INTERVOID into A-8. "Nice going, Juggyt" Mr. Karp

hissed. "Keep it up and we'll-" The Blue soldiery swarmed forward. In a trice, Mr. Karp was being dragged

off hy his heels. "Peddling without a license," I remarked, then scowled.

blere was another unprecedented turn. Mr. Karp, not myself, was being hustled off to jail. Private A Lee wad dled up.

"Some haul, eh, Bub?" "Take me." I directed, "to your

leader. And hurry."

Time was pressing. It would be commendable, naturally, if the aroused A-Sians overthrew the conquering pseudo-humans single-handed, but it would be fatal to article three of my stratagem. Le.: sell Unecks

NSIDE the courthouse, while Private A-Lee hustled off to arrange an interview, I attempted to interest officials in patriotic slogans, such as "UNITE WITH UNEEKS" and WITH VICTORY "VICTORY PARKER JONES," However, all contacted parties, lacking authority, kept referring me to other departments with

the result I quickly found myself high in the dome outside a room from which issued a weird tingling force, A guard politely suggested I leave, "The room of mystery," I remarked and started back.

A collapsing step placed me rapidly in the basement. The entire building, obviously, had been constructed of the unstable, rubbery soil.

"A rudimentary plastic," I decided. Its warmth to touch led to the obvious conclusion

"Faulty insulation," 1 frowned. Down the hall, I perceived several rooms, isolated by fine-meshed grillsin which huddled the helmeted fiends. Mr. Karp, Captain Bradley and the designing beauty who had foolishly tried to thwart me languished behind one grill.

"How's things going, luggy?" Mr. Karn asked.

"Smoothly," I replied.

"I'll bet!" Captain Bradley injected.

"Karp, I still don't trust this blunderblimp. If he slips up--" "I won't slip," I said haughtily.

'Neither will I forget your criminal act regarding spacegrams, nor your shocking condition-"

"See what I mean, Karp!" Captain Bradley leered.

A passing A-8ian attracted me to a disorderly room where I perceived many pseudo-humans, writhing beneath strans upon brown-stained tables.

White-frocked A-Sians were waddling about, removing the erg-shaped belmets. One case-that of a monster disguised as a very voluntuous blonde presented difficulties. The A-Sian doctor finally straightened in exasperation seized a large ax and swung it down on that creamy white neck.

The helmet was removed. So was the patient's head

Then, possibly due to the extreme heat. I lost consciousness

REVIVING, I found myself in an antiquated A-Sian auto, progressing down the city's main thoroughfare. Private A-Lee sat beside me, driving Both auto and street were fashioned from the unstable plastic.

Since roads and strange materials are constantly injecting themselves into my campaigns-chiefly by violent oxidation-I took my hypo-mag cigar lighter and applied the flame to the car's dashboard. The material shrunk slightly, but other than the outcropping of several whitish bumps, it failed utterly to iznite.

Private A-Lee wagged his head "You sure are de-charged. We had a time, dragging you up those stairs . . . The commissioner says he'll see you

when we get back." "Back?"

"I'm on a 12-day furlough, I'm taking you out to the farm to recuperate. It's a reward. Your warning enabled us to mop up in great style." I frowned. With the false humans

annihilated, articles one and two of my stratagem-free A-8 and save my system-would be concluded. Even three was threatened. I must, obviously, find a peace-time substitute market. My eye alighted upon this antiquated car's scorched dashboard.

"How long," I asked, "will it take us to reach your farm?"

"Five days. It's away out west, butted against the Poison Hills."

"Perhaps," I said, remembering that a complete line of Uneeks still reposed in the freighted COMETDUST, "if I could furnish a quicker means of transportation-" "Don't bother. I'd just have more

time to argue with Paw. Blast it, some of his old-fashioned ideas on bow to prevent spot-light, blemishes and

such make me boil1"

"What's your crop?" "Humerus. A special hybrid type."

"Where do you market it?"

"Here in A-8ton City, naturally." "And how is it transported?" "In cars something like this."

"Then," I said triumphantly, "what would you say. Private A-Lee, if I could furnish a means to reach your market, not in days, but in hour's time,

thus eliminating the tedious haul in vehicles incomparable to the sleek. speedy, free-flying Uneek-" "You." Private A-Lee said. "re-

cuperate fast! Speed-blah! We get enough of that from the Stingbees,"

"The what?"

"Stingbees. Blast 'em. They zoom over the Poison Hills and before we can rush a warning around, half the country is stung out of its harvest. . . . Ocons!"

An irregular thumpy noise came from the car's right rear region. We

were. I noticed, on the city's outskirts, directly opposite the army camp. Soldiers were drilling furiously around the

freighter COMETDUST which loomed high above surrounding barracks.

Private A-Lee stopped. "Flat tire," he said, kicking disgustedly at a mushy brown mass around the right rear wheel, "We've got no spare, either, No

farm for us." "Wrong," I seid firmly, gazing

across at the COMETDUST. pare, sir, for an amazing experience."

THE cabin of the 22-jet, one-man airsled - Uneek's latest - was cramped, due to Private A-Lec's plumpness. Before starting, I explained each control, simultaneously watching the unique drill maneuvers going on about us. The squads, marching towards the COMET-DUST'S tel-iron hull, would, at a

voiceless command of "BREAK" continue ghost-like through the ship.

I zoomed off with all iets blasting out dazzling white streamers. My line of flight, unfortunately, was sideways, due to a slight rearrangement of controls. Before leveling off. I interposed some spectacular loops-removing the roof of Headquarters Building by mistake-to impress my prospect, only to discover that Private A-Lee had, at the start, given himself the "Break" command and had slipped through the airsled's bottom to the ground where

he stood now, conversing with his fellow soldiers. All were waving their spears in hysterical approval. In bowing, I under-

shot, mowed dewn ten barrack buildings and landed atop Private A-Lee who, luckily, "broke" himself the instant of impact and was once more inside the ship.

At his unspoken although hasty

"Maybe," my passenger said, "I can hide you out somewhere on the farm.

suggestion, I took off. Ho, mamma; what a mess!" Skimming the rapid, silvery stream

west of camp, we circled far afield, reaching Private A-Lee's farm nestled against the crystal-white crater wall, The elder Mr. A-Lee, who met us, proudly cut a knobular-ended root

from the plastic field. "Turning white already," he boast-

ed. "And look at that top soil! Nary a pimp in forty acres. Old-fashioned.

eh!" "What," Private A-Lee said, suspiclously, "goes with our south forty? . . . Spot-blight!" he raged as we ar-

rived at a field marred with nely red blotches. "You and your quack remedies!29

By popular request, I retired to a cave-like fissure in the crater wall-The solid cavern floor was strewn with whitish crystals upon which neither A-Lee would sten.

Alone, I bathed my blistered skin carefully in a briny stream and after dark, roamed the spot-blighted field. seeking more nalatable water. I found a brook but the weighty water displayed such an alarming tendency to slip through my fingers and explode

into myriads of small globules upon striking the ground that I desisted. "Heavy water," I decided. "Un-

doubtedly noisonous." Private A-Lee came waddling up

rapidly. The cops -the cops-" The Blue A-Sian officer, following

him closely, made an unpleasant gesture with his spear.

"I suggest," he said voicelessly, "you both come peacefully." "Both?"

"Naturally. The crime of aiding and abetting an enemy white-"

"Enemy white?" I smiled. "Surely. you can't believe me--" The officer pointed at my hands,

The briny water had soaked away the coal dust.

IN the courthouse jail, I faced a scowling Mr. Karp, a leering Captain Bradley and the cunning womanlike fiend whose name was Sila. Her long tresses had been combed across her helmet to conceal it.

Private A-Lee's body seemed grotesque amongst the remaining prisoners, most being true earthmen from

the two spaceliners. "Juggy," Mr. Karp said, "did you ever hear of a robot?"

I nodded "Uncek Fliers builds a combination course-plotting, flightmaintaining gyroscopic robot-pilot which sells for-"

"I mean a robot that can walk, talk. figure-" "In Old Washington's museum," I

'said, "there's a device which can solve geometrical problems in-"

Mr. Karp made a choking sound and pointed at Private A-Lee. "Juggy, what is that?"

"A brave A-Sian." I said. "who risked his all that I-" "Just what I expected," Captain Bradley sneered, "from a lug who

called thought-transference 'Advanced ventriloquism'! . . . Who," he asked, indicating the brown-eved Sila, "is that 920

I scowled. "A monster whose heart is black with intrigue." Mr. Karp held his head, moaning,

"Juggernaut, don't you realize what you've done?"

"Certainly," I said, "by a clever stratagem, I jolted Private A-Lee's people from their lethargy, enabling them to overthrow their pseudo-hu-

man conquerors."

"I think," Captain Bradley said, nullified, too."
"I'll slur you!"
Captain Bra

"Not while I live, you won't!" Private A-Lee's thought flashed angrily. Mr. Karp groaned. "Live, this crazy frankensteinian monster calls

it!"
"Sir?" I injected.

"Now?" Captain Bradley pleaded, rolling up his sleeve,

"Wait," Mr. Karp said. "Juggy, think hard! That secret room of tingling waves—this power of thought projection—the insulating helmets the scarcity of metal in this plastic world. Can't you tie that together?"

In removing my handkerchief—the heat suddenly becoming insufferable—some whitish crystals I must have collected in the cave, flew under Private A-Lee's feet. That gentleman jumped squeamingly much to Mr. Karp's surnise.

"Our beads," Mr. Karp murmured, "may get chopped off."

"Mine as well," Private A-Lee broadcast grimly. "Now," Mr. Karp said, "we're get-

ting somewhere."

HE began babbling questions about the humerus farm, the cave, the Stingbess, which all A-8ian farmers dreaded because of the inadequate warning system—even inquiring about Private A-Lee's power to melt away leg shackles. To convince my scoffing rival, the soldier demonstrated upon the cell door. Abruulvi, there was no

rival, the soldier demonstrated upon the cell door. Abruptly, there was no door left. "Now," Mr. Karp said, "it starts. Sila. does your crowd know what to

do?"
"Right. We'll attack along the road."

"Bradley, your job's to get this gang aboard the INTERVOID. Without helmets, A-Lee's gang'll think we're

Captain Bradley nodded. "And the Pri-INTERVOID'll take off immediately. I'll stay behind and be ready on the his COMETDUST in case you've got to tills

"This," Private A-Lee's thought came darkly, "is confusing." "Easy," Mr. Karp soothed. "After

all, it's you we're thinking of. Here's the idea: you guys've got everything under control but those crop-destroying Stingbees. In slow autos, you can't get the warning around quick enough. Now, if you could promise your commissioner a lightning fast method of relaying a warnine—"

"The machine," I said hurriedly to Private A-Lee, "for this courier service is, of course, a speedy Uneek airsled which can speed across-country without fear of flight disruptions your uneven-bottomed rivers would certainly create in an outmoded, repulser

ray..." Mr. Karp said,
"have believed it. Not even from
Juggernaut Jones. He still thinks these
mechanical..."

"Stow it," Captain Bradley snarled. "Time's a-wasting!"

OUT of fairness to Mr. Juggernaut," Mr. Karp said to Private A-Lee as the personnel of both spaceships walked boldly from the cell en route the INTERVOID, "we will make this another competitive test. We will ride my Glider airsled to your humerus farm where Juggy's ship is parked. Assuming that the Stingbees are attacking, we'll speed the warning back here where, supposedly, a fleet of courier ships is waiting to blanket the country. Naturally," he added with a worried glance at me, "the first sled to arrive at the courthouse wins the order."

Stealthily, we made our way to Mr. Karp's inferior airsled still parked beside the hedge, bearing flowers so like Sila's eyes. I sighed as that girl, together with Private A-Lee, Mr. Karp and myself, iammed into the cabin. To think that a Glider one-man sled could rise with this overload was ridiculous As we took off, I noted that, even with the added nower which had been unethically engineered into this demon-

strator, its performance was sluggish. Below us, we saw Captain Bradley racing towards the army camp and the COMETDUST. Back of us, the IN-TERVOID went rocketing skyward

"Thank God!" Mr. Karp muttered. To cross the fast-running river west of the army camp, my rival chose the bridge for support, knowing the dangers an uneven river bed afforded his downward-pressing repulser rays.

At the humerus farm, while I readied my flier. Mr. Karo took Sila on a test flight along the white-walled cliffs

"We'll each take a passenger," he said upon returning, "Thus testing

durability as well as speed." Naturally, Sila chose to ride with me. She, I noted, had even fixed up a lunch box. Private A-Lee reluctantle climbed in beside Mr. Karp who

shouted. "When I count three-go!"

I was away at blinding speed even before he finished, "One!"

"That wasn't fair!" Sila protested. "You," I soothed, "don't know Mr. Karp's trickery." I frowned. "Another incredible turn. I am in from

at the start!" "You're wonderful!" Sila thought.

patting my hand. We did an Immelmann. Before I could wreach the controls from the terrified girl, Mr. Karp had drawn abreast. Then, slowly, that unethicelly high-geared Glider began inching

ahead. I grasped the throttle. Several notches remained before high speed but Sila, in her fright, had bent that lever's guide so that, tug as I would the lever refused to slip past.

The craven Mr. Karp suddenly hurled his starboard rays against us precipitating a wild power dive. I reached for elevation lever. I tugged. It would not budge. That, too, Sila

had bent beyond repair "The crisis," I said, "And, of course, our end?"

R ALLYING to my clarion call of "Danger!" the soldiery Blues had overthrown their human-like conquerors. But my dream of a peacetime fleet of Lineek courier planes would die with me. The A-Sians would purchase Mr. Karn's inferior product, incomparable in stock models even to this highgeared demonstration model.

"Courage!" I cried and waited. No crash came. Opening one eye, I saw that Sila, given maniacal strength

through fright, had freed the elevation lever. Leveled off, we were rocketing along behind the dastardly Mr. Karp. We were pearing the city. Ahead,

lay the wide, rapid river and its one bridge toward which Mr. Karp was already winging. Both bridge and road were crawling with spear-armed hordes of helmeted pseudo-humans. Brave but out-numbered Blues were waddling nost the COMETDUST, where Captain Bradley waited, and out of the

army camp to the road to give battle. A surprise counteract. Objective: the courthouse and its mystery room This contest, then, was more than a

test of product. I raced again to cry "Danger!"; to save a A-8 and our system. "Mr. Karn." I said. "is in league

with the monsters!" He had succumbed to Sila's wiles, He had tricked ex-farmer A-Lee into securing our release. He raced now to

securing our release. He raced now to destroy.

Mr. Karp was leading. And drawing steadily away for though I wrenched

furiously, I could not force the throttle open.

"The super-crisis!" I cried and my agile brain spun into action. What had brought this ghastly turn?

Mr. Karp's trickery!

"Fire." Loried, "must be fought with

fire!"

Centering Mr. Karp's machine across

my vision shield, I flipped the "on" switch of the forward-pointing rockets. My airsled slammed to a mid-air stop, perfectly matched tubes spitting flame. Mr. Karp's rickety ship was spinning insanely. I had rocket-blasted him dead center.

Salvo after salvo, I crashed against the blackened hull, driving my competitor for afield

the blackened null, driving my competitor far afield.
"I have," I thundered, "fought fire with fire. Now-on to victory!"

I hurled my sled low acrois the water. My rocket blasts hissed deep into its surface, I turned, expecting to see flames writhing skyward to check Mr. Karp forever. There was only a rustred crust upon that silvery surface.

"That river," Sila said, "is mercury. These automatons are built of mercury which they drink as we do water. They hold us to their metallic will with the courthouse thought-nullifying machine. We might have beaten them but you—yon—"

Mr. Karp, unhurt, was already streaking in my wake. A faster airsled —and the courthouse still far away. Out over the rushing Mercury River, Mr. Karp darted. And things happened.

A^S those flight-supporting, downward-pressing rays struck that

o near-noble medium — far more dense than water—they were swept aside like match sticks by the moving liquid. The Gilder started whirling pinwheel fash ion. Its trunk-storage door flopped open and a quantity of white dust

"That," I said, "looks like crystals from my cave."

"You-" Sila said, "you--"

She snatched the controls and hurled us southward. Her helmeted cohorts were slashing rapidly through the outnumbered Blues. We went roaring up the road on which they fought with friend and foe diving to escape our rocket blasts,

"Our last chance!" Sila was thinking wildly, "The courthouse!" She wrenched the cover from her

She wrenched the cover from her lunch box. Inside was more of the st strange white crystals.

"This," I said, "has gone far enough." Sila smashed the box down on my

head. The crystals flew everywhere. The raging girl was swinging a wrent flucked. The wrench struck the control board. Several levers snapped. All rear rockets blanked out, Qulckly, I reversed the ship and switched on the forward tubes. Only two responded. But our fall was checked. And as we backed, at a snail's pace

only inches above the road, I dug at my smarting eyes and licked my lips. "Sait!" I cried and my agile brain went into high gear. "Sait is sodium chloride. And sodium has the power to solidify mercury. A deadly poison, then, to these mercury-neme. By sprinkling sait upon the courthouse, you two planned to render it hors de combat. I, V. Parker Jones, have thwatted you with my own hare—"

"-hands!" Sila finished. "Look at yours!"

My flesh was stained with weird red

blotches, exactly like the deadly spotblight which was rayaging the A-Lee bomerus farm

"Dogmed!' Lchoked

My rocket blasts were gouging deep into the road. lifting a most nauseating stench. Yet the pseudo-humans were charging unburt through oily smoke clouds, flinging back the crumbling Blue army.

Mr. Karp, too, had righted his vessel, crossed the bridge and was rocketing fiercely towards us. He would pass my crippled Uneek with ease. His trunk corners would vield enough salt to blanket the courthouse Blues solidified, the thought-nullifying machine would stop. Thousands of the

unhelmeted fiends would then join their soulless brothers. A-8 would fall. And then . . . Earth,

Mars et al! And Sila was again lifting her wrench to strike me.

"Fire," I said, "must be fought with fire."

SNATCHED the wrench and struck the girl squarely on the head. Her metal heleset solit into fragments. Sila screamed. I struck again, She stonged screaming. Opening the cabin door. I tossed her limp white body down upon the roadway. My rocket exhausts bissed across it. A Blue stumbled over the blackened hulk. He

stopped and drove his spear down. "That." I said. "should do it." Below, the scorched earth was lumping up weirdly. The charging whites were tramping upon those bumps.

breaking them and then skidding helolessly about like chickens on ice-to die as the Blues dived jubilantly back to battle. As Mr. Karn raced closer, Private

A-Lee cours requely "broke" himself and plunged through the Glider's bottom to land unburt and join in the slaughter. Yet, passing me, Mr. Karp and his

salt could still wreck all.

"Fire," I said, "with fire!"

I tilted my ship. With superhuman strength, I jerked the throttle past the bend. The rockets hurled me unward. Mr. Karp braked too late. There was a splintering crasb and both machines

spun into the roadway. I scrambled out of the wreckage just as Mr. Karp emerged. "I lived," he screamed insanely, "to

break your fool neck!"

"Drastic but necessary." I soothed "Our friends, the Blues-"

A spear whistled past my ear. Another cut a gash across the back of my red-speckled hands. The first tinge of doubt struck me. "In the heat of the battle," I said

uneasily, "the A-Sians can't tell us apart. My friends-" Another spear burned across my

nether regions. Courageously, I led the way through a bail of weapons across the parade ground and up the COMETDUST'S gangplank.

Captain Bradley was in the control room. "They've got us." he said hollowly.

Out of the walls came a horde of turnin-headed, blue-bodied A-8ians, Their bloodied speam crystalized my doubt into solid fact. "My sales plan," I said, "has failed.

There will be no courier service, no speedy Unceks to-" "Planes!" Captain Bradley shricked.

"He habbles about sales when these crazy robots--" The blue warriors lifted their spears.

Every eye gleamed a murderous red. "I'll cheat 'cm!" Mr. Karp shouted.

bounding insanely at me, "Before I die, I'll bust every bone in Juggy's head!"

"Sir?" I inquired.

Mr. Karp screamed, "I'll break every bone-" Confusion reigned about us. The

surprised but well-trained soldiery were disappearing into the floor and thence to the unstable ground below. obeying the "break" command I had cunningly goaded Mr. Karp into

screaming.

Captain Bradley leaped for the controls. A solit-second later the COM-ETDUST was thundering skyward. free forever of this strange planet and

its weird blue moon.

"We," Captain Bradley said, rolling up his sleeves, "will take turns, Mr. Karp, Juggernaut Jones, we're gonna beat the living tar out of your fat-" "Living?" I said sadly. I held up

my spot-blighted hands, "You wouldn't, gentlemen, strike a dving man 23 MUCH later, the spacegram which

was tenderly placed in my blightravaged hands as I lay in the isolation ward, bravely awaiting the end. was. I confess, a bit startling. The message was, of course, from

my immediate superior-one Harmon

T. Dee-and it read: "Belated investigation proves incred-

ible iact, YOU WERE RIGHT! Your commendable stand enabled Mercurymen, who had been blown from diametrically opposing life-blane by 1010 blue-star cataclysm, to defeat their flesh-robots who were in revolt. . . .

By means of captured helio-beam broadcaster, which fiesh-machines had used in cunning attempt to obtain metal for insulating helmets, Mercurymen are conferring on you Distinguished Service Medal of Crossed Humerus Bones. . . Sila being repaired and will be presented to you along with 400-acre farm equipped with evebushes, hair-tree archards and enough bone-growing fleshland to construct and service one thousand robots per

season. . . . Entire attacking force of pseudo-humans destroyed after running afoul of giant blisters von burned upon flesh road. Mercury-men steambing Uncek Fliers with orders for airsled courier planes to be used to warn of Stingbee (mosquito) attach. . . . Private A-Lee, now CAPTAIN A-lee. sends best wishes for speedy recovery from spot-blight disease you contracted

from his land. Quit sniffling, you (deleted) blimp! All vow've vot is measles.

HARMON T." THE END

TIRE MAGIC!

ARE YOU weered alout freping your au-A tomobile talkage down? Of course you are! Do you worry about your tires? Of course you do! Then read closely what Science has found

In these trying times, anything that will seid mileare to automobile tires deserve attention, and car owners everywhere will munt to know what Transmotive Laboratories has to say about the Problex Rubber Sevines System that it has developed. This preurvative has a losse of sovabeen oil (old faithful!) connequated with several well-known cionolcule that theth the do-

terioration of rubber

is absorbed quickly and falls the poors, cracks. minor cuts, and aleredone; it seen the outside surfaces against oil, grease eas, and air, as well as the barmiol rave of the sun. It can be upplied with the tires in place by lessucesion in a special dispoint tank, permitting them, together with the spare, to be treated in as little as from 20 to 30 minutes at a cost of about 50 cents a tire. All binds of tubber products can be benefited from

this process. This may be the life-saver of the war on the home front. One can impore a typical fillingstation stone: while the driver steps to re-paint her stockings, her tires, too, "ran be close"- vil during the time it takes to drink a color!

This substance is a lose viscosty postfrant that



VALLEY OF THE RLACK SUN

by LEROY YERXA

Here in this valley light became dark under the influence of an incredible black-shining sun!

THE Gypsy girl's soft fingers traced the delicate lines in the palm of Gloria Duncan's hand. The Gypsy's forehead wrinkled slightly and when their eyes met across the table, there was a look of fear in them that made her lips firm and white. An expression of bewilderment that mirrored itself on the faces of Gloria Duncan and the tanned young man at her side.

"Well?" Gloria said. "I came to have my fortune told. What do you sec in my future that's bright? Any tall, dark young men?"

She turned to blond-headed Ray Walters, and the deep love in her eyes betrayed her innermost thoughts. At the expression on his face, she besitated. Walters looked as though he had seen a ghost. His dark eyes were on the Gypsy. Slowly, Gloria Duncan faced the Gypsy girl once more. The thing that had started as a lark for the two of them, had for some reason bevond her ken become dark and sinister. "I-I don't understand," she didn't know why dread welled into her heart.

"Please, what is the matter with you The Gypsy girl beyond the table

two?"

stood up slowly. She moistened her lips.

"I'm sorry, Miss Duncan. Youhave-no-future!" Gloria Duncan laughed. Somehow, there was nothing else to do. They had come here, Ray and she, because Ebon Vale had gained no mean reputation as a foreteller of the future. Contrary to the world's usual picture of a fortune teller, Ebon Vale was lovely. Even as she stood before them now. swaying against the table, her wide-set blue eyes, the mass of golden hair piled in curls atop her head, made her more

a queen than Gypsy. Gloria had laughed because Ray believed in these silly things the readers of the palm could tell. Now she laughed again, but the hysterical, frightening ring of her laughter mocked her from the curtains of the little room

"Everyone has a future. I've paid to find out. I know this is all a joke. but after all "

She stopped, waiting for Ebon Vale to explain herself. Ray Walters stepped close to the table that separated the couple from the strange girl with the golden hair, chilled by the look on Ebon Vale's face. There was too much fear there. Too much certainty. Her words had the ring of sincerity that frightened him.

"Look here, Miss Vale," his face was quiet and earnest, but pale. "Miss Duncan came here because we thought it would be fun. Glorfa and I plan to get married next week. With all the emotional strain she is now under, I hate to worry her with foolish things. Be a sport and give her a good future with three kiddies and a cottage with

roses, will you?"

He smiled at her, waiting. Ebon
Vale's expression did not change. She
drew away from them and her head
lifted with that slight touch of haughti-

ness that characterizes true faith.
"You came here because you wished to laugh at me," she answered. "You thought me the dirty, tent-show for-tune teller who would take your money and I cannot lie."

"Then you mean . . .?"

"Exactly what I said," Ebon Vale answered through tight lips. "No one is more sorry than I that Miss Duncan has no future."

She tossed two coins on the table, turned her smoothly-clad young back to the bewildered couple and walked through the curtains. They stood alone, staring at the two half-dollars they had naid.

Gloria Duncan's fingers groped out and into Ray Walters' big brown palm. She looked up at him smiling

She looked up at him, smiling.

"Let's get out of here," she urged.

"The darn place gives me the creens."

There were tears in her eyes as she spoke. Gloria Duncan, for the first time in her carefree life, was deathly afraid.

SCAR VALLEY, Ray Walters had often thought, was the nicest bit of

scenery he had ever had the pleasure of driving through. Nearly sixty miles from town and several minutes from the state highway, the rugged walls of Scar Valley were seen by few. They had often come here in the past, Gloria and himself to sit for hours along the Scar River, admiring the share, clean-

cut cliffs and the green lushness of the valley itself.

to visit.

There were tales in the little Pennsylvania towns about the "Scar." Simple hill people told their folk-tales of the whimsies, little round-bellied, flameshaped people who darted up and down the cliffs at night, trying to lure travelers over the steep walls. All these stories made the Scar a more interesting place

Today, as Walters felt the hard firmou ness of the steering wheel once more in his grasp, he breathed a sigh of relief. Goria had settled quietly into the soft leather cushions and was staring over the top of the cliffs and at the sun bewood.

"What a horrible girl," she shudse dered suddenly. "It's—it's good to be out in the sun again."

Walters turned carefully, looked at her. Gloria Duncan was the prettiest girl he had ever seen. In three days they would be married. All the freshness of those cool chestnut locks of hair, the warm gray eyes would be his. Every inch of her from slim ankles to the laurching lius would be his treasure.

They rode in silence for several minutes. The valley was nearly three miles long and another five minutes would take them through the high gap that closed it from the world. In spite of himself, the Vale girl troubled Walters. He knew that Gloria was

thinking of her also.
"You have no juture."

He shivered, remembering the words and what they implied. What in the name of common sense could happen to Gloria? She was a picture of health. Although the Pennsylvania sun still burned high in the sky, a slight haze came in slowly and darkened the valley. Without realizing it, Walters drove a bit faster. Something tense and shadowlike was dropping down over Scar Valley. He switched on his narbine liebus

he might meet another car on the road. The haze grew thicker.

"Ray?"

"What is it, sweet?"

"That haze? I've never seen it this way before. It's getting quite dark."

He sat forward on bis cusbion, eyes glued to the darkening road. Still a mile to go. He switched on the headlights and they cut ahead through the gathering darkness. Ray Walters shook his head.

"I don't like it," he said worriedly.
"Almost like an eclipse. There aren't

any scheduled, are there?"

She snuggled closer to him in the broad seat, her fingers seeking his arm.
"I don't read the papers," she laughed nervously.

IT WAS getting to be a nuisance now. The darkness had settled completely, making a world of blackness with them in the center of it, a world that something other than common sense told him consisted of Gloria, himself, and that queer girl back in the old house.

"I wish we hadn't come," Gloria's voice was becoming hysterical. "There's going to be a storm. Maybe maybe this is what Ebon Vale meant

Ebon Valc! Walters' fingers tightened on the wheel and automatically he pushed harder on the accelerator. His fingers were wet and white beads of perspiration started from his face. Ebon Vale—black radley! One and the same. The jul's name meant black valley. Why hadn't he thought of it

beginer. The Scar River came in tight beside them now and the road plunged into the last mile. The canyon was close, twisting out toward daylight and safety. The girl at his side, overcome with terror, clung close to him. High above him on the blank walls of the canyon he thought he saw sudden flashes of flame-

like light. They darted up and down against the black curtain of rock. Far ahead around the last curve, daylight filtered in—the sunlight that he

light filtered in—the sunlight that he was fighting to reach. One more curve, high above the roaring chasm of the Scar's swirling bed . . .

A lonely pine marked the curve, Ray Walters spun the wheel around, felt the titres spin in akt inches of loose and, the titres spin in akt inches of loose and, the spin in th

swirling water below.

Through Ray Walters' head, as they poised that one second in mid air, one message pounded bome a million times.

"You have no juture! You-have-nojuture! You . . . have . . . no . . ."

"YOU are safe now. There is no cause to worry."

Ray Walters beard the voice seemingly from far away, and recognized it at once. It was Ebon Vale. He tried to sit up and was surprised to find that no river water soaked his clothing. Rather, he felt as though he had been long and refreshingly asleep. Nothing in Ebon Vale's room had changed.

Ebon Vale, cool and lovely, was standing over him. She was clothed in an ankle-length robe of shining, translucent material. It wrapped smoothly around her body leaving the wealth of long hair, the smooth shoulders free. As he stared up at her from the couch, she smiled. Something far-away and

haunting in that smile brought him upright, frightened for Gloria. "Gloria . . . where is she?" He tried to stand up, felt her force him backward with a light touch of her hand and

realized that his body was without strength to resist. It was as though a strange spell had been cast over him. "I told your fiancee that she had no

future." Ebon Vale said swiftly. "She was killed when your car went over the cliff."

He forced himself upright, staring at her with angry eyes.

"You lie," he shouted hoarsely, "You-you . . ."

Ebon Vale's expression didn't change. The same look of natience was there-He allowed himself to fall back against

the brocaded nillows of the couch. "Relieve me" she said "It was not

my choice that you stay in the Valley of the Black Sun. I am not in control . . ."

"Wait a minute." Walters got up from the couch, stood over her. She shrank away from bim as he looked down at her, "The valley of what?"

"You were left alone in the Valley of the Black Sun," she explained, "Those who see the sun fade here, can never see it arise again elsewhere.

Gloria Duncan is dead, but of the two. perhans she is the most fortunate." He clutched the softness of her arms above the elbows and shook her.

"You've done something to Gloria! The black sun business, the wreck. They were your doing." "No! Please release me. I only

predict. I cannot force the decisions

of the Whimsies." "Whimsies?" Walters released her.

letting his arms fall honelessly at his side. "Either I'm crazy or you are, What in the devil are the Whimsies?" Ehon Vale stepped away from him.

rubbing the red marks that showed on her arms where he had gripped her. Her head dropped forward humbly. "Perhans in your world I am crazy

she admitted, "When you hear the story of the valley you will believe me.

They will convince you." Ray Walters, feeling that he was about to lose the last bit of remaining

sense he had, sank back to the edge of the couch. Could this be happening in the center of Pennsylvania on the banks of a normal river encased by the granite walls of a natural valley? But there was no mistaking Ebon Vale's sincerity. At least to him, she was

being honest. "All right," he said finally. "Tell me the story and what part I'm to play

in this crazy business." "You play no part," she answered simply. "The Whimsies have chosen

you to be my mate. You will live here away from the sight of normal man and act as figure-head ruler of the Whimsies, even as I will be their Queen."

"THERE are tone scales and light scales," said Ebon Vale, "that are not audible or visible to human senses." She sat on the low rock wall of the garden behind the great house, her fingers toying with the stem of a queerly blackened daisy. Ray Walters sat at her feet, conscious of the intense blackness of everything about him. The

valley looked the same as it had before, with the difference that everything was in black and white. The trees, the land, the cliffs that towered in a distance, were in fine shades of black and gray. His eyes saw no color, even in the girl. She was like a figure cut from black paper and placed there on the wall before him. He listened pa-

tiently, trying to find some clue to this insanity.

"Most people consider the Whimsies are part of a fairy tale," Ebon Vale went on. "For many years people have seen them here at night, bright flaming

beings, and gone away thinking that they could not actually exist.

"Yet, the Whimsles are very much

alive. Some say they are imps of hell, sent here to practice their mischief."
"And you?" Ray asked. "How did a girl like yourself get into this black

mess?"

She leaned back against a stone that was higher than the rest.

"The Whimsies chose me because I had come here to live. They changed my vision so that I saw their world in this valley, not my own. Just as, in a like manner, they have changed

you.

"The Valley of the Black Sun is as it is, because in your eyes as they now are, a vast curtain of cloud hangs over it. The sun filters through that screen changing it to a light that is not visible to the human eye. If you do not be

lieve, look up."
Walters studied the sky above them.
Far to the west a vast ball of blackness
was sinking over the cliff. The sum
turned black as night. Yet the valley
seemed to responds to its light, sending
shades of gray and black across the

opposite wall.

"It will he night soon," Ehon Vale
said. "Then the Whimsies will come
to take their place here."

The blackness of the sun was gone. The girl stood up, looking pale and

lovely against the wall.

"It's all wild—impossible," Walters confessed, "hut I'm beginning to believe it. What of the Whimsies? I still know little of the part I am to play."

Ehon Vale's face grew tense. She stepped close to him and ber hair, blowing in the dark air, swept from her neck and against his coat. Her arms reached up and around his neck.

"I am alone with you, a girl who is to he your queen," her lips were warm

against his. He pulled his head away, startled. "You still wish to know the part you

are to play?" she asked, drew his head down again. This time he did not force her from

him. With the warmness of her pressed to him, lips soft against his own. For a moment he forest Gloria and

the world he had lost only this afternoon. He closed his eyes tightly.

The depths of his eyeballs suddenly shot white hot fire into his brain. There was daylight; bright, flashing

smilght in his eyes. He wasn't holding Ebon Vale. In the flashing intensity of the light that cut into him, he saw Gloria. She stood, arms about his neck, staring up at him besechingly. Her expression of humiliation and sorrow sent him reeling backward. With effort he opened his eyes again.

Ebon Vale was still there, several feet from him, staring with fright at the man before her.

"Gloria!" he shouted. "I saw her. She was here, in my arms." He was sure now, that Gloria was

not dead. Whatever the spell that was upon him, Gloria was alive and suffering. He would for the time heing, do as he was told. Later, when he knew something of this wild fantasy he faced, there would he time. There was the small comfort that when he wished, his longing could for a minute crase this world in black and white and regardless of its terrors, bring back his own

colorful surroundings. "Okay, my ducen," he said with a touch of sarcasm in his voice. "I'll be-

have myself from now on." Did he fancy it, or was there a sudden look of intense hatred in the eyes of the girl who took his hand.

"We must go now," she said. "The Whimsies will be waiting."

THE queer black sun was gone. Scar Valley seemed asleep under a black

drape of night. As Ray Walters followed the girl down the incline from the old house, he wanted to close his eyes once more: summon that vision of his own world. He thought of Gloria and that look in her eyes of horrified anguish. Ebon Vale had said she was dead. But she wasn't! The road was short to the cliff. He

followed Ebon Vale quietly, depending on her as he would a staff. He had been here before. He and Gloria had sat beneath these very trees, feasting their eyes on the green of the valley. It was changed now . . . dark and dead, like a flat photo in black and white.

He stumbled forward like a man in a deep dream. Ahead, on the face of the cliff tiny flashes of red flame flickered up and faded against the rock There were more of them now, seeming to fly inward toward the rock wallconverging in a group around the large hole of a cave.

The girl turned, a smile on her lips. "It will not be long," she whispered.

"You need not be afraid." At that moment fear was far from Walters' mind. Only a curious, dull feeling of distrust. A feeling that Ebon Vale, her body swaving ahead of him like a white torch in the darkness, was planning his destiny alone. The feeling

that this world of black was of her making and hers alone. But in spite of every attempt he made to hate her, there came that overnowering attraction

to her body.

The forest cleared and across a short stretch of black meadow a great hole opened into the face of the cliff. Through it poured a steady, darting stream of the red flashes he had seen against the wall.

"We are here," she stopped, took his arm and held herself close to him. "You may lead." Walters crossed the meadow like a

man led to his own hell and went down the sharp incline into the cave. Ahead was only blackness. It was broken by the steady flow of the fire-like Whimsies who darted through the air on all sides of them From below, warm air and the steady

chatter of tiny, musical voices drifted up. He went down, Ebon Vale's hand still tightly clenched on his arm.

Then the cave opened wide and a huge chamber confronted them. Walters stopped short, his eyes wide with what he saw. The Whimsies were alive! They had sharply pointed little faces, tiny horns and paunchy bellies that appeared to have absorbed more than their share of food.

They were tiny folk, hardly more than eight inches tall. Their bodies were for the most part, feathery and brightly red. Long, arrow-pointed tails twisted behind them as they swirled through the air,

FBON VALE went ahead of him again, across the open cavern to a

huge rock that was carved roughly to seat a human figure. She turned her face to him, sank back into the rock chair and motioned him toward her. The cavern was alive with the light of the Whimsies now. He went forward and sank down beside her. "You need not fear for your safety or your sanity," she said quietly.

"Some would call these people my brain children. They are harmless,"

The Whimsies seemed wildly excited now. They swirled into a tight circle around the pair and one of them

settled to Ebon Vale's knee. He was slightly larger than the others and his tail spread across her

lap and dropped over the edge. He spoke, and his voice was loud and shrill, like a small child's. "Our queen hrings a visitor?"

She reached down and stroked the sprite's head gently. "I hring you a ruler," she corrected

gently. "He will stay with me and help with our affairs."

At once an angry shout went up around her

"We need no king. Our land is well ruled hy you. The affairs of the Whimsies are not for humans."

Ehon Vale held her arm aloft. Anger flashed in her eyes and for the second time. Ray Walters could swear

he saw cruel sadism there. "I wish this man to rule," she shouted, "My wish is not to be ques-

tioned." The Whimsie on her knee turned to the flashing horde behind him,

"The valley of the black sun will he ruled as our queen sees fit," he squealed. "You will remain silent."

Returning his attention to Ebon Vale, he continued. "There are affairs for our queen to-

-warries are over-the Whimsies are mad." The word mad-mad-mad went

hounding around the cavern on the lips of the tiny throng. "It's all a damned nightmare!" Ray

Walters whispered to himself. crazy, insane dream."

His head was pounding with the shrill shouting in his ears. He closed his eyes tightly, trying to escape the sound. Then it happened again . . .

At once Ebon Vale was gone. The Whimsies were gone. In the girt's place, seated on the cave chair was Gloria Duncan.

HE WANTED to speak to her, hut he couldn't. She sat there hefore him, in the empty black cave. Her lips moved and he knew she was hegging him to free her.

"Take me home," the lips moved freely. "Please, take me home before

it's too late." "Too late for what?" he wanted to scream. Something hit sharply into his

shoulder. His eyes snapped open with pain. The Whimsie had jumped from Ebon Vale's knee and plunged his hard, arrow-like tail into Walters' shoulder. The girl seemed to he waiting for him, still angry from her quarrel with the Whimsies.

"You are tired?" she asked. Her voice was edged with sarcasm. "I suggest that your eyes remain open." "Yes," the Whimsie settled once

more on her lan, "You'll be much more contented." Something within Ray Walters rebelled.

He wondered suddenly why he had not fought his way out of here long ago. Why he had succumbed so gracefully to Ebon Vale's every wish? He night," his tiny eyes flashed devilishly. was still sure that somewhere Gloria "Hearts to be mended-fun to be had was waiting for him alive. If he could not force himself from the dream in any other manner, he'd fight his way out.

> He stood up quickly, wondering what the reaction would be.

"You grow bored so soon?" Ehon

Vale arose, to stand before him with flashing eyes. "I suggest you cause me no further trouble. It was difficult enough to obtain you."
"Ohtain?" Blind anger came over

him. "I don't understand. Did you plan all this deliherately?"

plan all this deliherately?"

He wanted to turn away. To go

from the cave in spite of all she could do to prevent it. The slumberous passion that arcse in Ehon Vale's eyes held him as though he were tled. She pressed against him and the warmth of the entire place seeped line in she obly. Her eyes seemed to drink from his own and as she stared, Walters realized that he was being hypnotized as surely as though he stared into the eyes of a color.

The intense desire to sleep came over him. The cave flashed bright with the flame of the Whimsies, and grew black before his eyes. In his sleep nothing troubled him. No visions of Gloria. No black with

Like a broken record, the voice said

"I am Akimba—I am Akimba—I am Ak . . ."

"Go away Akimba and let me sleep."

"Go away Akimba and let me steep."
Walters rolled over on the rough floor, felt a sharp twinge of pain in his shoulder and sat up. Rubbing his eyes he looked about.

He was still in the cavern, but the place was deserted. Or was it? What about Akimba, the troublesome voice? He stood up and brushed the sand

from his trougers. Yes, Akimba was there. He was the Whimsle who had sat on Ebon Vale's knee. The little rod sprife who had ruled the works. Akimba fluttered down from his place on the cave shelf, hit the floor with a thump and strutted across the sand. Now that Walters had time to look him over more closely, the little chap wasn't

half as hard to believe. He had legs that were feather-covered, and a small bare stomach. As he walked, he wobbled a little under the weight of his load.

"Too much honey," Akimba said wryly, rubbing his stomach. "Can't leave the stuff alone."

leave the stuff alone."

As insane as it seemed to talk with something one couldn't even believe

existed, Ray Walters had no choice.

"Where is the girl, Ebon Vale," he asked. "The rest of—of you. Why

asked. "The rest of—of you. Why are we alone?" Akimba grasped his stomach and

pulled it up to the position of an inflated chest, "They're gone," he announced proudly, "I've been assigned to guard

you. Three black suns have passed since you slept first. We are to go to our queen now that you have awakened."

The thought entered Walters' mind that here was an opportunity to escape. What possible chance would the tiny Whimsie have to hold him, once be

decided to go?
"If you're looking me over with any
thought of me being helpless," the
sprite said suddenly, "perish the
thought or it will perish you. My tall
can set mighty poisonous when I want

it to."
Walters chuckled.

"Smart little fellow aren't you?"
Akimba snorted.
"None smarter," he agreed. "I even

had ideas of being king until you came along."

Hold everything, Walters thought.

Perhaps there is a chance.

"Tust what does this kingship con-

"Just what does this kingship consist of," he asked. "Now that I'm here, I'd like to know my duties."

"It ain't the job it used to be,"
Akimba's face darkened. "There was
a time..."

He stopped suddenly, as though fearing to go on.

"There was a time . . . " Walters prompted. "Go on, tell me about yourself." Akimba settled down comfort-

ably. "If she finds out." he said with a glance toward the door, "Fill lose my neck, Well! What the heck, why not?"

AKIMBA talked fast, his tiny voice sounding like a badly tuned flute.

"The valley of the black sun was our home long before Ebon Vale came here," he started. "People have seen us for centuries. We do no harm in our cave and at a distance we just look like fireflies."

"But where did you come from?"

Walters broke in. "What do you do here?" Akimba's eves twinkled. "Ever hear of Rip Van Winkle and

the dwarfs?" he asked. "Yes."

"Well, we're like the dwarfs." Akimba went on, "We were here from the beginning, and there just isn't any reason for us. We like It here. No one troubled us until Ebon Vale came. "You see, she learned the magic of

the black sun." Walters was growing interested. "How," he asked, "am I able to see

your world and the black sun? When I came here before. I never suspected." "That's a simple story," Akimba answered. "Ebon Vale is a strange woman. No, let me say she is the complex personalities of many women.

She came here many years age and in her heart was the secret of seeing things no other could see." Walters sat down and crossed his legs. For a moment they were silent.

"Why?" Walters asked, "do you say she is a part of many women?" Akimbo grinned wisely.

"Ebon Vale would have died a hundred years are, shere she not able to utilize the minds of vounger women to preserve her own body."

The Whimsie's words left Walters thunderstruck.

"A hundred-years . . .?"

"Ebon Vale came here two hundred years ago. She came from an eastern country across the sea. She remains invisible until she wishes to regain more youth. Then, with her secrets, she draws young girls to her side and takes from them what she wishes "

In Walters' brain there surged the memory of Gloria Duncan. How, at times, when he closed his eyes, she and not Ebon Vale was before him.

Then this was the explanation. It was not Ebon Vale at all that was heside him. but Gloria Duncan, impris-

oned within the Gynsy's body. Akimba was growing impatient with the pause.

"Well," he asked, "what more does the mighty, but helpless king wish to

know?" "The black sun?" Walters begged.

"Tell me about it. Why do I see it?" Akimba shook his head sadly. "That I do not know. It is some sort of spell that Ebon Vale casts upon

you. I think you humans call it hypnosis. I understand little, except that without it we Whimsies would be rid of all you humans, and could dance about the cliffs to our hearts' content without bowing to a queen and king." He spat the last words out as though they were very distasteful to him.

IN Ray Walters' mind a plan was slowly formulating. A plan that might be wild, but not nearly as fantastic as the things he had just listened to.

"How would you like to be free?" he asked suddenly. "How would you like to be rid of both your queen and myself?" this statement. Akimba's eyes danced with joy, then

his face darkened, "Can't be done." he said. "We've

tried " "Give me a chance." Walters begged,

"I'd do anything to get out of this nightmare myself."

Akimba thought for a long time, His

tail danced about restlessly. "All right," be said finally. "Go ahead, and welcome. What do I have

to do?" "Just get me out of this place,"

Walters answered quickly. "Show me the way back to Ehon Vale's house and I'll do the rest " "You can't find out her secret,"

Akimba cried. "She'll kill us all." "How?"

"With her magic." Akimba was truly distressed. "She makes us bring her food, clothing. She makes us frighten all people away so that she may have the valley to herself. If we don't do it. she'll destroy the screen that brings the black sun and we will all perish."

"Listen to me, little man. This valley protects you and her, because your eyes are tuned to the screen that makes it dark and safe. To us humans who come here every day there is no black sun. It is the bright sun, splashing down on green and brown and all the colors of the universe."*

* Let no thought of fantasy enter your minds so far as the 'black sun' is concerned. There exist, beyond the approach of the human eye, certain light rays that are invisible. Experiments create ortificial black light. Yet there can be no doubt that it is cossible for black light to exist in a natural state; in other words, light, that we cannot see with the eyes we now have, and yet would be clearly visible with some other

Watch a dog some time as he stons suddenly in his track and starts barking loudly at some object that in our eyes does not exist. Is there any proof that it does not exist in the dog's eves?-Ed.

Akimba was properly startled with

"You don't mean that Ebon Vale has been lying to us That she has no power over our world?"

Walters nodded "I mean exactly that," he said. "If

you existed for centuries before she came, why should you depend on her

now?" Akimba stood up, stomping his

feathered feet angrily. "What are we waiting for?" he

shouted.

R AY WALTERS was almost upon the old house before be could see it through the black mist that covered his eyes. Akimba, anxious and worried, he left behind at the cave door, Once, just before he opened the door to the old house in the valley. Walters closed his eyes. Sun flashed in them and the valley was green again. Daylight blinded him and he opened them

Somehow Ebon Vale's spell only partly worked on him. It was on her failure that he must depend. If, when the struggle came could be close his eves tightly enough?

quickly.

The door opened protestingly under his hand. The huge room at the front was empty. He could hear a silvery voice, singing somewhere beyond the door. Opening it slowly he saw Ebon Vale as lovely as ever, standing with her back turned to him. She turned, as though sensing his presence.

He went to her, clenching his teeth. She tried to catch his eves with hers. but he looked straight at her throat and riveted his gaze there. Her arms went about him, holding him close to her, For that next instant he fought off the

desire to look at her face; her smooth cheek, her deep eyes. A shiver ran through him and he re-

membered that this was not a girl, but a creature who ruled the valley with youthfulness stolen from others.

Closing his eyes tightly, be concentrated on seeing Gloria Duncan. He heard her gasp with surprise as his arms went around her walst. Then, as she screamed her hatred, be pressed his lins tightly to hers.

The brilliance of a thousand sums seemed to strike him directly in the face. Light tore through his head, pounding against every nerve in bis body. He opened his eyes.

He saw Bhon Vale, as lovely as she had ever been. Her body, tense and fighting at first, gradually relaxed against him. Her eyes were vague in bits sight. He could only see lips and soft, waving hair. The face changed. The pain went from his head and it was as though he was gradually awakening. Coming through the darkness into the light, and the light felt good once more.

He knew she was drawing him back and that she was no longer frightened, but determined. The couch was behind them, but before he reached it the face close to bis began to change. The features of Ebon Vale fashed. In their place were the blurred, lovable dimples, the faithful eyes of Gloris Duncan. He beld ber closer, breathing a prayer for what was taking place. Suddenly they were falling, together, through space.

WHEN Gloria Duncan awakened that morning in City Hospital, she was radiantly happy once more. She looked around her at the clean curtains, the spotless walls.

"Ray!" She raised ber voice gently.
Walters sat beside her smiling. His
eyes were covered with a bandage.

"Yes, Sweet. Feel better this morning?"

She sighed, stretching back comfortably on the smooth pillows.

"Much, Ray. I'd like you to tell me something."

For a moment fear ran through him. Fear for what she might know. He steeled himself.

"Go on," he urged. "Ask your questions."

Gloria sat up, leaning on one elbow.

"Doctor Saunders says they found
us lying unconscious in each other's
arms, on the river bank," she said.

"How did we escape?"

"I think in the excitement I must have pulled you out of the water and then passed out," he answered.

She smiled at him tenderly.

"Doctor says I'll have these bandages off my eyes in a couple of days," he said. "I can't understand what happened to my eyesight. He says that I was stone blind when they brought me in. A film which be can't describe, is already fading away."

Ray Walters took her band in his, after fumbling for it. She said: "We're safe, the fortune teller was wrong. I have a future.

That's all there is to it."
"I wisb that wer all there is to it,"
he said softly. "They couldn't locate
Ebon Vale when they went for her.
There was some talk about finding the
body of an old, old woman in the house

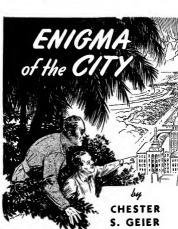
where she had been."

Walters held her tightly against him.
"It's like the old fables of the fire"It Whimsies," he said. "You can't beliams the things the old times any

lieve the things the old timers say about Scar Valley. It's a breeding place for myths."

"It was odd." Gloria breathed as he

released bis hold on her. "I had sure a mess of conflicting dreams until I regained consciousness here. You know, I sate those Whimsies you mentioned ..."



A new Earth civilization, free of wars, was to be founded here on this new world. So they staked everything on the voyage and found that it was already populated...



of the rain clouds which would hring

In another moment the girl was standing before him, her small bosom rising and falling rapidly beneath her simple blouse. Perspiration beaded the tanned oval of her face and darkened her auhurn hair where it swept back from temple and forehead. She

looked up at him with grey eyes that were clouded with anxiety. "Hello, Susan," Reid greeted, in the quiet tone with which he always spoke to her. "I was just going up to the Parsec to see how Doug Lain's coming along with the engines." He gestured

up toward where the slope levelled off to a hroad and grassy rise. Here, limned against the green sky, rested

a great rocket freighter.
"You shouldn't exert yourself like

that," Reid went on. "This isn't Earth, you know, and we've got to take things easy until we grow accustomed to New Terra's heavier gravity."

Susan Carew hrushed his gentle admonition aside with a sudden rush of

words.

"Any sign of the auxiliary yet?"
Reid shook his head slowly; the admiration which had glinted in his
hrown eyes from slight of her died
away. "None," he answered in a voice
grown curiously flat. "I've got lookouts posted on high ridges at four different points. They haven't reported
auxhling."

"John, something must be wrong!"
the girl declared worriedly. "Steve
should have been back in the auxiliary
days ago. What possibly could have

happened to him?"
"I don't know, Susan. But look here, now, it's nothing to get excited about. Steve probably just went a hit further on this scouting trip than he usually does."

"Yes-but even then he should have

g been hack before this! Don't try to put me off like that, John."

THERE was a moment of strained silence. Reid became subtry water that her eyes were earching his face. He looked away uncomforted way up comforted way wrong. Steve Norlan had been gone eight days now with more than merely overtuse. Reid knew that the soout always paded his note than the soout always paded his trips with the exactness of a time schedule, and this delaw miest residue.

Reid looked down at the tiny valley which lay at the foot of the slope, fighting down the weary hitterness which was flooding him. Steve Norlin. Always it was Steve Norlin. Was she

h, hlind?

By His moody eyes came to rest upon

mean disaster

the camp which lay sprawled down there in the valley, and something of calm and comfort came into them. It was a sight which never failed to bring him some measure of peace. Peace—

and at the same time, unrest.

The camp was spread out with only

the faintest suggestion of geometrical planning. At first glance, it resembled something that might have been built hy a people whose degree of civilized development had just progressed beyond that of living in caves, It was crowded and noisy, poorly constructed, littered with all sorts of imaginable things, from tools and personal helongings to stacks of piled logs not yet trimmed for building. Completed houses, really little more than crude wooden shelters stood here and there mingling with others just under construction, while in several places stood flimsy tents consisting of a length of cloth draped over a framework of poles.

Through it all, busily engaged at a multitude of tasks, moved a small band of some two hundred men, women, and children. These were John Reid's charges, the Arkites, as he had come to think of them, exiles as they were from a war-devastated Solar System. He thought in the same way of the Parsec which had brought them here to New Terra, not as the old, lumbering freighter it once had been, but as a great Ark bearing these last remnants of a once great species to a virgin

world to begin life anew. The Arkites had been in extremely difficult circumstances even while on Earth, and their present situation had been changed but little, save for be fact that the war which had menaced their lives had been left far behind. foir that..." Their bodies were grimy and unkempt with toil, their clothing bedraggled and tattered. More than a few wore bandages about their limbs as mute evidence of their clumsiness and unfamiliarity with even the simplest of tools. They were thin, too, and had Reid looked carefully through the shimmering heat of Alpha Centauri, he might have noticed the sullen lines of discontent which were growing about when Susan spoke of Steve Norlin. their mouths and eyes.

BUT Reid did not see the crudeness and discomforts of the camp. Neither did he see the discontent just breaking into bud. He looked through the heat with a dreamer's eyes, and the vision he saw was one of glittering, sky-high towers and a people happy and wise in their greatness.

"You should have listened to Steve," Susan went on. "You should have had a radio installed ahoard the auxiliary, so that if anything ever went wrong, we'd get to know about it in time to help."

The vision faded from Reid's eyes:

the old bitterness crept back, wasn't absolutely necessary," he responded patiently. "Besides. neither the time nor the materials could have heen snared in setting up a radio system. There's no telling what kind of weather we'll be having on this world. and it's imperative that we get the camp set up and organized as soon as possible. Everyone and everything we

Susan pushed back a stray lock of auburn hair with a work-roughened hand, her red mouth set stubbornly, "I know that-but it seems to me that in your concern for the others you might have a little more consideration for Steve. He's doing by far the most dangerous work of us all, and it's only

have is needed for that."

She broke off suddenly: her voice softened. "This is a strange, new world. John, and there are so few of us bere. . . ."

"Of course," Reid muttered. He bent down suddenly and plucked one of the spear-like blades of the grass that grew about him. He felt appry . with himself, and a little ashamed. He knew that his face had gotten that look of a jealous, small boy as it always did Reid frowned down at the blade of

grass in his band, running a calloused thumh along its serrated edge. Trouble was, he was almost old enough to he her father. Why, streaks of grey were already beginning to appear in bis crisp, black bair. He was a fool for ever daring to imagine that Susan might be interested in him. An old

Steve Norlin was young and handsome. He had all the necessary dash and charm. He knew how to act around women, knew all the clever and witty things to say. Reid felt his own deficiency in this respect acutely, He'd

fool

been too busy all his life to cultivate the social manner. There had been so many other things to do. . . . He tried now as always, to tell him-

self that Susan didn't really matter. He was already well started up the path that led to final realization of his dream, the vision which had kept him inspired through the long, hard years. That was all that counted now—final

realization of the dream. But he glanced up from the blade of grass and looked at Susan, and now, as always, he knew that the final realization would be all the sweeter if she were there to share it with him. This small, rounded girl with her wealth of auburn hair and her cool, grey eyes was the embodiment of certain others dreams, of which up to the time of dreams.

meeting her, he had been too busy to become fully aware. "I've got to go," Susan said abruptly. "I've got a lot to do." She turned from him; her grey eyes refused to

meet his brown ones.

"Of course," Reid muttered again.
The bitterness crept from his eyes and hardened around his mouth as he watched her go. Her purposeful figure went quickly down the slope and toward the camp. Soon it was swallowed up in the general bustle of the Arkites.

R EID stood alone upon the slope.
Up in the green sky Alpha Centaust was beginning to edge down toward its resting place behind the tremedotus mountains that lay to the north. It was nearing evening now, with the swittness with which days passed on New Terra. The heat still held, thick and oppressive.

Memory of his intention to visit the Parsec came back to Reid; he crumpled the blade of grass in his hand, then let it drop to the ground as though it

were a hope he was reluctantly casting aside. He resumed his journey up the slope, but something of the litheness of his earlier progress had gone.

It was not until he was several yards from the ship did Reid notice the lank, bony form of Doug Lain standing just within the airlock. Lain was wiping his hands on a bit of oily waste, and his long, seamed face was expressionless.

"Oh — hello, Doug," Reid said, faintly startled. "Thought I'd come up to see how you were getting along." "I saw you talking to Susan," Lain

is said quietly.

"Why, yes. She wanted to know if the auxiliary had been sighted yet." Reid looked at the other with a trace of defiance.
"That isn't quite what I meant,"

Lain said. His features softened momentarily, and he gave Reid's shoulder a gentle punch. "Wake up to yourself, John. If she can't see that you're worth two of that Norlin Don Juan any old day, then she's not worth the trouble of running after."

"It's not that. It's just that she's young, and I'm-well, I'm pretty well along, Doug."

d Lain threw the bit of waste aside with an abrupt gesture. "That makes little difference, john. I know she's has a seen of values, too. Norlin's a slacker. You know we had to give him tast job of scouting in the ausiliary to the state of the state of

know that its animal life hasn't de-

veloped far enough even to be re-

motely dangerous. Norlin's a trouble maker as well, mark my word."

REID nodded slowly; this last applied in his own case, at least. And more than once he had wished that he could find the necessary time to take over the scouting trips himself. Norlin was wasting too much fuel in searching for a site on which the Arkites could build a permanent settlement. There were any number of suitable locations which he might have

missed But Reid sbrugged these regrets aside: he turned to a more pressing problem.

"Have you found out what's wrong with the engines, Doug?"

Lain shook his head with something of disgust. "No results again," he grunted. "John, we'll never learn what caused that strange shake-up unless we take the engines apart bolt by bolt "

"I can't imagine what could have caused it." Reid said slowly, "I'm perfectly certain there was nothing wrong at my end. When the distance gauges showed that we were within Alpha's system, I began to cut power from the field in just the gradations indicated by our stress-relaxation formulae. There was nothing wrong with these; I'd checked and rechecked them often enough during the trip. The meters showed the propelling warp to be folding in normally enough. It was almost sone, when - blam. I thought the Parsec had turned inside out."

"Almost did-the old tub!" Lain growled. "I was tossed more than a dozen feet. Well, I guess the only thing that remains to be done now is to disassemble the engines. Pd never trust using them again without knowing just what was wrong."

They stood stilently together upon

the rise. Except for essentials, there was little need for words between them. Their bitter struggle through the years had forged about them an

unbreakable link of friendship. It was a friendship which had be-

gun at the university which both had attended during that turbulent last decade of the 26th century, when Earth and her rebellious subject worlds were rushing toward the brink of that terrible struggle later known as the War of the Planetary Secessions. It was a friendship founded on a mutual dream-interstellar travel.

To Doug Lain the dream had been one of finding a solution to the problem of crossing interstellar distances. But to Reid it had had more deepreaching significance. He saw interstellar travel as the harbinger of a mighty galactic civilization, and, in its more immediate results, as something which would avert the conflict which then threatened.

All the habitable portions of the Solar System had become overcrowded: man's last frontiers had fallen before his restless advance. There was seemingly nothing left in nature against which to pit his wits. So he had taken the only other outlet for his restless energies - he had invented quarrels with his fellows.

Earth's colonial possessions, which had been satisfied with the Solar Federation for over two hundred years. had been clamoring for their independence. Reid realized that it wasn't really this that they wanted. It was new fields to conquer, new outlets, new resources. Given the opportunity to

spread out to the stars, they would quickly forget their petty quarrel with BUT the problem of interstellar travel was a tremendous one.

Earth.

Somehow, a method had to be found which would enable the voyages to be made in as short a space of time as possible. They found the answer, finally, in Truman Varies "Supercosm" that vast and ingenious work which dealt with hyperspace as a higher extension of our three dimensional universe. Working from Varne's theory and formulae, they had began work upon a hyper-spacial driver.

But they had hardly progressed as far as building the first small warpgenerating engine when the war broke out in a sudden faceup of furious violence. In one stroke, Mars had seceded from the Sohar Federation and taken over all Federation bases and interplanetary Ranger stations within outer planets Ranger stations within outer planets followed her example, leaving Earth, Venus, and Mercuy facing a coalition of terrible, ruthless power.

Reid and Lain had worked feversishly while that tinnic struggle raged about them. At first they had entertained the hope that the introduction of interstellar travel would bring about peace. But as the war progressed the hates and bitternesses between both sides became so deep-eatered and virulent that they had finally come to the souther realization that nothing less out the other would bring an end to the conflict.

By the time Reid and Lain perfected their hyperspatial drive engines, the Earth had lain in ruins. They themselves had escaped destruction only because they had hidden their laboratory deep in a wild and unfrequented portion of the Adirondack mountains.

Only one thing had been left to do, and they had done it. In the Parsec, that old rocket freighter which they had long ago secured as an adjunct to their experiments and within which they had now installed their hyperspatial drive engines, they combed Earth's devastated cities for the materials necessary for the start of a new civilization. From roving bands of refugees they had selected the best physical specimens of mankind still left, always on the alert for scientists, teachers, doctors, engineers. The

art, using on the dark for scientists, art they do made a careful search for books, tools, food, and clothing. When they had gather all of this available, they had departed for Alpha Centauri, leaving foreove behind them the rains as mighty interplanetary orbitation. The trip through phyerogache also musewattle enough, with the minor exception of the strange whate-up that had occurred when they had not concept once one or the concept on the contempt of the strange whate-up that had societied when they had reached enough once more into normal space.

DOUG LAINS dram had been

D'achieved. But his was the soul of an adventurer who, having overcome one problem, goes forever onward to meet the next. Hyperspassill presented many mysteries; Reid knew that Lain would be occupied with these for many years to come. As for himself, his dream lay down there in the valley, with the first crude Arkite settlement on New Terra.

Reid's interest had always been in Reid's interest had always been in widuls, but people so much as individuals, but people as a ree, except and a respect of the reid of the

new and virgin world. Though he

to see it reach the pinnacle of its glory and greatness, he found satisfaction in the knowledge that it would be himself who, with his own hands, had given it the impetus which had sent it upward.

The shadow of the Parsec was long upon the grass; the great, bloated disc of Alpha Centauri was almost touching the topmost peaks of the northern mountains. Down in the camp the first fires of the evening were being lit. But the coming of night brought no relief from the heat; it pressed down, thick and mostly humile.

Lain yawned and stretched his long, lean arms. "Well, it's food and then bed for me. I'll get back to work on the engines in the morning."

Of a sudden, he stiffened, gripping Reid's shoulder. "Listen!" he hissed. A man's cry, dim and far away, had

sounded in a signal upon the air.
"The auxiliary!" Reid cried. "It's

coming back1"

louder, the pust-put of a rocket motor made itself audible. Silence had fallen heavily over the camp; the Arkites were standing like frozen statues among their fires, peering up at the darkening sky. In the west a tiny streak of flame became visible. It grew swiftly brighter until at last the auxiliary was circling the camp preparatory to landing.

"Come on!" Reid barked. He set off at a bounding run for the spot where he knew the auxiliary would come down, a charred expanse of meadow that Norlin always used as a landing field. The Arkites were already running in the same direction, their voices swelling into a clamor of excitement.

THE airlock was already open by the time Reid and Lain reached the liftle ship. In the dusk they could make out the figure of a man just emerging.

Steve Norlin waved nonchalantly at

the gathering crowd as though nothing at all had happened. His strong, white teeth flashed in a confident grin.

Panting, perspiration trickling down his face, Reid looked at the scout. In that moment he was ravice as forcetully as always by the neat, almost imcomplete the scott of the scott of the somehow managed to keep up. 181, pilot's uniform was just as nasty as it had been back on Earth when he was carring a living shuttling passer rockets through the stratosphere. It if little just as snugly, too, over his tail, little form with its forced shoulders that the strategy of the strategy of the scott his flying believe, and his througe hair.

just a shade darker than his skin, tumbled in curls about his forehead. "Where have you been?" Reid demanded. "Why were you gone so

Faintly at first, then louder and long?"

"Easy, skipper, easy! One question at a time, please." Norlin held up a mockingly imploring hand. He dropped it suddenly; there was an eager cry of "Steve! Oh, Steve!" and Susan came running into his arms. Sight of the two embracing was a

raging fire in Reid's heart; he looked away, biting his lips. But as though under the pressure of something vastly important, Norlin cut the reunion mercifully short.

"All right, baby, save it for later,

Papa's got news right now." He released the girl. He looked at Reid, then at the Arkites standing all around. "Folks, the reason why I've been

gone so long is because I've made a terrific discovery." Norlin leaned forward, his eyes glistening. "I've found a city here on New Terra!"

Silence dropped over the meadow, a

city."

complete and utter silence. It was as though the air had vanished to be replaced by the chill vacuum of interstellar space, taking away all sound, freezing all motion.

The figures about Reid blurred crazily. A sudden, unexpected slap in the face from Doug Lain couldn't have

stunned him more.
A city-here on New Terral It

meant that the planet was not, as he had hoped, uninhabited after all. The disillusionment was as hitterly keen as though some object of a life-long quest had turned to dust in his hands; for it spelled the destruction of all his

plans.
Reid forced his shock aside. The
Arkites had gotten over their own
amazement at Norlin's announcement,
and their voltes now rose in an excited
babble of sound. Reid could feel their

eyes upon him as they watched for what action he would take. He looked at Norlin. The words were difficult to form, but he got them

out.
"Where is the city?" he asked.

"What—what is it like?"

NORLIN grinned as though the question had called forth some mys-

"tion had called forth some mysterious inner satisfaction. He was facing Reid, but when he spoke, it was more to the Arkites who were eagerly pressing forward.
"Remember that great ocean to the

west that I discovered on my last trip?"
he began. "Well, I'd have no more
than a glimpse of it, and this time I decided to go clear across to see what lay
heyond. That spread of water is big;
even with the auxiliary eating up the
miles the way it did, it took me a long
time to get across.

"This world seems to be made up mostly of mountains; the country I found on the other side was no better,

except that the peaks there towered higher than any I've yet seen. There wasn't much use in crossing them, since I'd have had to keep to the stratosphere most of the time where accurate observation would have heen impossible. So I flew along the shoreline with the hove

that somewhere along it I might find a comparatively level area which would

enable me to get inland.

"It was a lucky thing I did, too, though I almost gave up several times. That shoreline seemed endless; I followed it for the greater part of two days. And then, suddenly, the shoreline and the mountains which paralleled it curved inward to form a tremendous bay, and within this, dim on the shores of its extreme end stood the

Norlin paused, and though Reid knew that the scout's nature was not sensitive enough for a true apprecia-

tion of beauty, he could have sworn that a vast awe glowed in the other's eyes.

"Sight of it so startled me," Norlin continued, "that I almost lost control of the ship. I landed in a convenient canyon just within the bay, and then climbed a high ridge for a better look.

The city is something to see, I can tell you. Even at that distance, it was a thing of soaring spires and mighty domes that gleamed with every imaginable color. And the location is ideal; in fact, it's just the spot I'd have suggested as a site for our own settlement.

gested as a site for our own settlement.
"If was already shout time that I started getting back to camp, but I couldn't leave without learning more about the city first. I decided to approach it for a closer inspection, without, however, using the auxiliary, since I thought it safest not to be seen. I packed a two-day supply of food and

then set off along the shore.

"But I was fooled all the time; the

city was much further away than it

had seemed. It was so big that its size and merely made it seem close. In a day and a half of almost constant travelling I got no nearer and so had to give up. I'd already been gone too long. But I did learn one thing—the people who live in the city are a lot like us. I saw a few working on outlying farms in the distance, and I watched them long enough to make certain that they are

erect hipeds like ourselves."

Norlin gestured. "Well, that's about all. I returned to the auxiliary in the canyon and flew back here."

THE figures clustered on the meadow were very still. It had grown dark; Alpba Centauri had set behind the northern mountains, leaving only a few crimson streaks in the sky. The heat pressed like a blanket over everything. Somewhere the voice of a child sounded in a plaintive cry of hunger.

Reid glanced covertly at the Arkites near him, and suddenly he felt a sinking sensation. Their faces were dim in the dusk, but he could make out unmistakably the hope and eagerness which glowed upon them.

Reid turner back to Norlin. "In the morning we'll service the auxiliary, and then you'll fly me over to see the city. As for the rest of you, you'll remain here in camp and continue your activities as though nothing had happened." His voice was harsh and authoritative.

The Arkites woke suddenly back into sound and motion. They started back to camp, gathered hickly about Norlin, their voices making a din of eager questions. Reld remained hebitad on the meadow with Doug Lain, thinking with a detached bitterness that the ruin which Norlin's discovery had brought to his plans had, on the other hand, made the scout a hero in the eyes of the Arkites.

"What a rotten break!" Lain mut-

tered. "All along we thought we were the only ones on this world, and now, after all we've done, we find out different. A city! That means civilization, John—intelligent beings." He paused a moment. Then his voice sounded again. "Well, what do you intend to do now, John? This end of the affair was always more yours than

mine."

Reid looked up to the stars which glittered in their strange constellations in the sky. His tones were heavy with weariness.

"We'll have to start all over again, Dong, You know that I've always wanted to do something with people as a civilization. Back on Earth, I'd say that the say of the say of the travel would pave the way for a might galactic culture—but the war ended that. Here on New Terra I saw my chance to get civilization started again. With a settlement near all the necessary resources, with books and teachers, I'd push would keep them going forward for all the years to come.

"But discovery of the city has changed all that. The Arkites remember only too well the easy life they led on Earth before the war. Machines did all their work; the merest push of a button satisfied every want. Norlin's city offers many temptations-especially so since the people there seem to resemble ourselves. The Arkites would want inevitably to live in the city. Once there, they'd lose their identity as a race, become submerged in another culture. There might be intellectual differences, too, which would lead to war and death. No. Doug, we'll just have to leave New Terra. On some world circling another star, we'll begin all ONOr "

"But do you think the Arkites will want to leave New Terra, John?" Lain asked slowly. "The city does offer many attractions, as you've said. They've suffered a lot already, and they may not want to go through it again."

may not want to go through it again."
"I'm sure they'll see it my way,"
Reid answered. "They must have
enough pride of race left to want to
hulld a civilization of their own."

BUT Reid felt a return of his earlier premonition. For the first time he wondered just how far the Arkles was the property of the property of

their all for a vision as intangible as the very air they breathed. Reid shoved these doubts aside for the present. He touched Lain's arm,

and together they walked toward the camp, hright now with its supper fires. Morning dawned with the sky as hrightly cloudless as ever. The rays of Alpha Centauri struck down with a heat whose intensity was almost like the im-

pact of something solid.

After breakfast, Retd, Lain, and Norlin began their task of servicing the auxiliary. Shortly before noon, they were finished, and after supplies had

heen loaded ahoard, Reid and Norlin were ready to leave. "Too had there's no room for you, Doug," Reid said. "I'm sure you're curious enough to want a look at the

city yourself."

Lain shrugged his bony shoulders.
"I can do without it, I guess. Wouldn't
be much sense in just taking a look at
it. anyway." He looked significantly

at Reid.

Norlin's head popped out from the airlock. "We're all ready, skipper. Let's go!"

Let's go!"

Only a few Arkites had come to the

"meadow to see them off. The others had remained in camp where there was o shade from the fiery heat of the sun. Reid took his place heside Norlin in the tiny control room and they blasted or off

It was one of the few times Reid had been up in the auxiliary, and he absorbed himself in watching the landscape crawl away far helow. He said nothing to Norlin; the scout himself was preoccupied with thoughts of his own.

By evening they were within sight

of the western ocean, and when night fell the continent they had left was far hehind. The steady drumming of the rockets and the peacefulness of the starstrewn night through which they sped hilled Reid to sleep. When he awoke it was to see the sun edging above the watery horizon and lighting the sky with its first, feelhe crimson rays.

Norlin pointed through the forward observation port. "We're almost there. You can see the tips of the mountains beginning to appear."

Reid nodded, then watched them swell into size. Soon they were within sight of the white sand of the shore, and Norlin sent the ship slanting downward to take up a course parallel to it. In the afternoon of the third day out, Norlin leaned suddenly forward in his seat, peering abead tensely.

"The bay1" he announced, after a moment. "See it?"

REID narrowed his eyes against the glare of the sand. In the distance, the white ribbon of shoreline ended as suddenly as though cut by a knife.

"That's where the shoreline curves inward to form the bay," Norlin explained. "Great cliffs rise out of the water on the other side of the inlet." Shortly they were entering the inlet

Shortly they were entering the lalet itself. This was nothing more than a vast slit in the mountains which tow-ered up fifteen miles and more on eliste. Reld gasped at the vista revealed. The hay was a vast one, enclosed on both sides by sky-high peaks. But it was not this that held his attention, this cyes were fixed upon the multicolored towers and dones that glittered at

the opposite end.
"There it is!" Norlin said. "Want

me to land now?"

Reid took a deep breath. "No. Pd like to get as close as possible. Skim a hundred feet or so above the shore until we're within sight of the farm lands you spoke of. If you hung the mountain walls, we won't be seen."

Norlin sent the ship down until the blast from the underjets was churning the sand. He cut speed for a more cautious approach. Reid watched the city grow, every atom of his being concentrated unon the sight of fit.

"There's the farmlands," Norlin said, finally, pointing ahead.

"Land, then," Reid answered.

Norlin landed on the shore close to
the mountain wall. He and Reid left
the ship, then climbed their way up to a
convenient ledge of rock. They looked

in silence.

Reid's face softened into lines of deep admiration at what he beheld. The city was like a jewel in a flawless setting. It rested on a tremendous plain, within a semi-circle of titanic moun-

tains. At its foot spread great farmlands, a vast patchwork of green, yellow, and brown. Mighty forests rolled away on either side. The location, Reid thought, was not

The location, Reid thought, was not only ideal; it was perfection itself. The dwellers in the city could look out to the waters of the hay. They were shel-

tered and protected by the mountains. They had ready access to timber and ores. Reid felt a depthless sorrow that this could not be for the Arkites. He knew that even though a lifetime were spent to accomplish it, it was not likely that be would find another spot like this

DOMINATING the scene was the dry inself. It was still too far away for Reld to make our any amount of detail, but he inser the heights to feel to the scene of th

away, emhittered.

"Look," Norlin said suddenly. "Let's
go down there. Let's go into the city."
His even were easer and reckless.

Reid shook his head with somhre slowness. "No. We can't do that." "But why?" the other protested.

"There's no danger. There can't be any danger. People who can build a city like that just couldn't he bad." "No!" Reid said again. He faced the scout squarely. "Norlin, it's about

time you awoke to the realization that his city is no for us. The people who huilt it have made real their own ratial dream of power and greatness. We must leave them to their glory. It would not be fair either to them or to us to share in it. We are another, different race—and at one time a mighty one. We should have enough pride in this knowledge to build and achieve for

ourselves."
Norlin's face was bewildered. "

don't think I get you, skipper. Do you mean we're never going to have anything to do with the city or the people who live in it?"

Reid looked away, nodding. "And not only that," he said huskily, "but as soon as we get back to camp, we're going to pack everything into the Par-

sec and leave New Terra." "Wkat!" Norlin's shout was a cry of utter amazement. "But that's insane, skipper. It's positively stark,

staring mad!" "Nevertheless, it's the thing we're

going to do," "Now look, skipper, you must surely know of the hardships we've all gone through in camp. We're all soft-I might as well admit it. We're not frontiersmen, and haven't been for over two hundred years. That kind of life is killing us-and it will kill a lot of us before we get a permanent settlement established elsewhere" Norlin

became desperately pleading. "To space with racial achievement, skipper! It's ourselves, here and now, that counts-not those who come after us. They wouldn't appreciate it anyway. Down there is an advanced city, inhabited by people like ourselves. Why, all we bave to do is walk right in and make ourselves at home! There just isn't any sensible reason for pass-

REID whirled on the scout, eyes blazing, his body shaking with fury. "Well, by all the powers, if that isn't the vilest bit of drivel I've ever heard." His voice became slow and concise with contempt and loathing.

again."

"Gone soft? Gone soft, hell! It's just that you've all gone rotten lazy to the core! You've pushed buttons so long that you can't get your mental pat-

terns adjusted to any other system of behavior. You've actually degenerated to the point where you'd be willing to crawl over to another race on your bellies, whining for the food and shelter that you're too shiftless to obtain for vourselves. "Well, I'll change that, all right! If

you all have lost your pride and ambition. I've got more than enough for the lot of you. I said we're going to leave New Terra-and we're going to. I said we're going to build and achieve for ourselves-and we're going to do just that. And I don't want to bear another word to the contrary, under-

For a moment Reid's angry eyes

stand me?"

locked with Norlin's sullen ones: then the scout's gaze dropped, and Reid made his way down from the ledge and back into the auxiliary. Norlin paused to throw a last, lingering look toward the city. When be turned to follow, his brows were drawn together thoughtfully

The return trip was made in strained silence. Shortly after noon of the sixth day, they were back in camp.

Reid found conditions in a bad way. The rains still hadn't come, and the terrific heat of Alpha Centauri had made its effects felt heavily. A strange fever had broken out in camp, and aling up an opportunity like this to go most a dozen Arkites lay sick with it. to another world and suffer all over The spring, which was their source of water had dried up, and now arduous trips to a distant lake had become necessary. Those of the Arkites who had yet the strength to move about were

listless and dull-eved, sullen, Reid told Lain of what had taken place during the trip. Lain's bony face

grew sombre. "John, you'll remember that I've warned you of Norlin being a troublemaker. There's no telling what he may do now. Things have gotten so had here in camp that the Arkites would grasp at almost any opportunity offered them."
"What do you mean?" Reid asked.

"What do you mean?" Reid asked, frowning. "You aren't suggesting that Norlin and the Arkites will go running

off toward the city, are you?"
"Not exactly, John. Look here—
wars have been fought over issues less
great than the present one; the Solar
System itself was destroyed over an
empty ideal. The Arkites have suffered
enough already. What you're asking
now will mean sure death for a lot of
them. You just can't expect them to
follow you that far. Then what other
course of action is left for them to

take?"

"R EBELLION?" Reid whispered.

His voice rose in a sudden burst of impatience. "But, good heavens, Doug, civilization is founded upon blood and sweat! They're to be expected; you can't built without them. Perhaps alo may perish in the building—even I may be among them—but what does it matter, provided that something has been accomplished in subshing the rice a sten or two nearer

toward its goal of glory and greatures?"
"I know that, John—but do the Arkites see it that way? Greatness and
glory are meaningless to them in they
resent situation. What they want
most is decent food and shelter, cleanliness and santation. They know they
could find that in the city." Lain took
a deep breath, his eyes dropped to his
feet. When he spoke again, his voice
faitered.

"John, I'm afraid that we've both bitten off more than we were able to chew. We thought we could play Gods with the Arkites, but we haven't been very successful. Not for many, many years to come could we provide all the comforts and conveniences that the city offers now. Maybe-maybe it's best if we were to go to the city."

"Doug—you too!" Reid's cry was, agonized, as though wrung with sudden, terrible pain. He grasped Lain's arms, staring at the other with wide, incred-

ulous eyes.

And then his hands dropped to his sides. He stepped back, his face a hard

lar mask.

"Doug, not even your doubt will turn
me aside from the goal I've set for the
Arkites. It's the right one and the only
one, and if neither you nor they can
see that, then you're only making things
harder for yourselves. Because reach
it we must—and shall. I won't permit
a small thing like comfort for a present
few to stand in the way of the future
of our race."

"John, wait!" Lain held up an imploring hand. "Pm not doubting you. I was only suggesting the only alternative to the present situation. I followed you this far—and I'll continue to follow

you, you know that."

Reid turned aside with steely purpose. "So much for that, then. We're leaving New Terra, and that's final. You and I will get to work upon the engines immediately. And as for rebellion among the Arkites in the meantime"—and his lips thinned against his teeth—"[12] take care of that!"

R EID mounted the slope and vanished into the Parace. When next he appeared in camp, the ominous shape of a blast-gun was strapped to his nip. Eyes widened at sight of the wear then gew narrow and vengether gew narrow and vengewherever he went, as though he had suddenly become something alien and deadly.

Reid said nothing in explanation as to the appearance and purpose of the weapon. His watchful eyes told him that the Arkites knew. He gave terse instructions for the partial dismantling of the camp, and the packing up of tools and supplies. Then he started once more for the Parsec to aid Lain in overhauling the engines.

"John, wait a moment."

It was Susan, waiting for him just at
the edge of camp. She indicated the

blast-gun on his hip.

"Why are you wearing that?"
"You ought to know. You've seen
the way things are shaping up in camp.

Have you come to tell me that you wouldn't scratch my eyes out for the chance to go to the city and live a life of luxury and ease?"

Her grey eyes were dark. "Not exactly. But—but if I were to tell you that, would you believe me?"

"Believe you?" Reid snorted disdainfully. "Are you trying to make me think that you'd be willing to pass up this chance to get back to the easy life you've known—pretty dresses, perfume, iewelry—all the other things

a woman loves?"
"Yes," she answered, very softly.
"Susan!" Reid grasped her by the
shoulders, his fingers bitting deep into
the soft skin. "Look at me, girl! Are
you playing with me? What do you

mean?"

Her solemn gaze met his bewildered one. "john, do you know what I was before the war? A deb—a silly play-girl. My father had loads of money, and there was never a thing I had to do. I wasted my time in a constant her was self the file for no new Terra hoth have taught me something. I discovered a upropes in life, a reason for heing. I've had to work and suffer with the rest—but, John, I've enjoyed

it! For the first time in my life I was

doing something real and vital. I was

actually usefull"

"Yes, hut I don't see--"
"Wait. John, I'm probably one of

the very few here who really believes in your dream. I want to see the foundation laid for a new and better civilization. And I'd be willing to work for it, for I've found happiness in working, accomplishing. But the others don't and just can't see it that way. They've suffered terribly-more so, lately, with the heat and the drought. They know, if they left New Terra, that they'd have to suffer again -perhaps more intensely on another world. They can't take any more; they're cracking up now. And I can't bear it. John!" Susan's flow of words ended in a sudden sob. Her

small face grew appealing; her lips trembled.

"I don't care for myself," she went on. "But I can't and won't let have suffer any more. They're whispering about revolt down in camp. Oh, of course, I know about it. And I can't let that bappen, either, for it'll mean burt and death to many." She paussed;

her grey eyes went dark again.

"John, I know how you feel about
me. It's so obvious—Look, then, if
—if I gave myself to you, would you
take the step necessary to avoid further
suffering, and possibly bloodshed?
Would you allow the Arkites to go to
the cite?"

REID stared at her, numh with shock and amaze. "You—you'd give yourself to me—for that?" he asked buskily.

"Yes, John."
"But you love Norlin!"

Her eyes dropped to her roughened hands; her bead nodded slowly. "But he doesn't enter into this," she said suddenly, looking up. "It won't make any difference. I swear I'll be just as faithful—" Reid was a statue of stone to whom words were useless. Susan's head bent again, and she bit her lip while tears crept from her eyes to tremble at the ends of her long lashes.

Reid looked down at the bowed, auhurn head and the small shoulders shaking beneath their solled blouse. He knew a sudden, overpowering urge to take her in his arms and hold heclose. But he knew this could never he, and he turned aside. The sad, sweet melody which played in his heart

ended on a broken chord.

He started up the slope toward the
Parsec, but once again the girl's voice

reached out to hold him hack.

"Iohn—don't you want me?"

He whirled. "Want you! Why..." he choked back the words which would tell her of the love and longing that filled him the way rich, vibrant life would fill the city of his dreams. His face grey once more fill-tilke.

"What ever made you think that I would consider having you as more important than the future of our race? Building on another world, we'd preserve our culture and traditions. Living down there in the city, we'd lose our racial identity just as surely as though we'd remained in the Solar System and perished with the rest. Did you think I would permit that—Did you think I would permit that—

just for you?

"And did you ever stop to think for a moment that the people in the city might now welcome us with the friendly, might now welcome us with the friendly, the property of the pr

because of some idiotic religious, political, or economic reason—or simply because they don't like our smell." Reid made an ahrupt gesture.

"Enough of this. As soon as Lain and I fix up the engines, we're leaving New Terra." Without another word or backward glance, be started up the slope.

AT THE top a sudden, chilly sensation made him pause. Wind! It riffled through his hair and whipped the end of his tunic about his shorts.

the end of his tunic about his shorts.

It hummed in his ears and the scent of it was fresh in his nostrils.

Abruptly, the sky darkened: Reid

Abruptly, the aby darkneed; Reid clooked up to see a great, black cloud slide across the face of the sun. And then the cooleans was not only of the wind; it swept down upon the world will be a sun to be a sun t

New Terra was stirring into ominous, elemental life. The trees that grew at the farther end of the rise were twisting and swaying as though in torment, their leaves rustling like a thousand tambourines shaking in a palsy of terror. The dry, hrown grasses dipped and rose like waves unon a restlessly

heaving sea.

Rain! Reid ran the rest of the way
to the Parsec and bounded into the air-

"Doug!" he shouted. "Doug! Come here quick!"

here quick!"

When Lain appeared his long face
was pale and strained. "I thought—
What—" And then he noticed. "Rain!"
he whispered. "Good lord, at last!"

They watched while the wind swooped and tore at them and the great, hlack cloud banks spread until they seemed to cover all the sky. Lightning flashed again, and again there was a shaking neal of thunder. It was like a signal sounded upon an immense drum somewhere in the heavens. Rain hegan pattering down in large, full drops, slow at first, then faster and faster until at last the water spread from sky to earth in an almost solid grey sheet.

"Great space, John!" Lain exclaimed. "All hell is breaking loose

out there!"

thing!"

Reid nodded, his eyes wide with appall. It was true: this was not the mere rain which he had expected at first_it was a storm of tremendous. terrible proportions. The wind had hecome a screaming, raging gale, the lightning crackled and flared almost continuously, and the thunder crashed and boomed like the death knell of a world. The very earth seemed to quake heneath the Parsec.

Reid stiffened suddenly. "The Arkites!" he cried. "My God! Doug. I've got to-" His face grey and

twisted with apprehension, Reid started out into the storm. "Come back here, you fool!" Lain screamed. "It's too late to do any-

BUT Reid was already out in the storm. He staggered forward a few steps and then the gale swooped down at him, smashing him to the ground like the vicious swipe of a titanic palm. It tore at him, actually rolled him over. The rain heat at him.

pummelled him, blinded him. The din Battered, gasping, deluged, Reid fought his way back to the airlock. Dimly he was aware of others near him

of the storm deafened him.

was struggling. Then the cold metal of the Parsec's hull was against his hand, and he felt along it for the airlock. His seeking fingers met wet, human flesh: others, too, were seeking to enter the ship. He acted automatically, mechanically, numbed by the fury of the elements with which he was in contact. One hy one, he helped them into the ship, pushing, pulling, his hands slipping on slick, wet skin, while all the time he fought to keep his feet and balance in the terrific gale. He didn't know how many there were: his senses had become too over-taxed for the registering of further impressions. There was a seemingly inter-

in the storm, struggling forward as he

then there was nothing but blackness. When Reid awoke he found himself inside the Parsec. That much of his first awareness of things told him. When he turned his head a moment later, it was to discover that he was lying on the floor within general lounge, propped up hy what seemed to be a folded hlanket.

minable interval while he lahored there in the midst of the storm-and

The lighting and heating units had been turned on for this part of the vessel and it was bright and comfortable enough, save that it had the stuffy, tainted atmosphere of a crowded room. And it was crowded, Reid saw. For a moment he had hopes that all the Arkites might have escaped the

storm. "John! Are you all right?" Someone knelt heside him. It was Doug

"Doug-how is everything?" Reid

demanded tensely. "I don't know vet. A little more than half the Arkites managed to reach the ship during the first full fury of the storm: you yourself helped a

large number. They kept coming in

trickles after that. Some are still arriving, but we won't know the total amount of damage done until the storm is over. And that won't be long now."

W/ITH a sudden pang of apprehension, Reid thought of Susan, His eyes darted quickly ahout the crowded room, and then he slumped hack in relief. The girl was hent over the recling form of an Arkite in a far corner, tying a handage. He had noticed Norlin, too, conversing with a group of men. Obviously, Susan and the scout had been among the first to reach

the Parsec.

Reid thought of his own presence within the ship. He had no memory

of having come ahoard.
"Doug, how did I get here?" he

asked, turning hack to Lain.
"I went out and pulled you into the
airlock after I realized that you had
passed out. I was there all the time,
helving you get the Arkites inside."

Reid grinned affectionately at the other. "Good old Doug! I'd never once been aware of it." His voice grew suddenly hrisk and grim. "But there's work to be done; I can't lay around like this." He struggled to his feet and walked unsteadily to the cen-

ter of the room.

"Attention, please! As soon as the storm ends, we'll go down to camp and plack up surviven. I'll want volunteers for that. Then several of you might go down in the bold and lacked apart a dozen crates or so which we can use as streetless. I'd like to have a been been a soon of the woon go the soon to be soon to

Are there any doctors present?"

Two of the Arkites stepped forward,
dispirited, weary-looking men whose
clothing hung in rags. Each gripped
a sodden and battered medical kit.

"Good!" Reid acknowledged. "Geosome broth as soon as it's ready, then stand by for action." He turned and left general lounge. From the storeroom he gathered a number of fluorotic lantens, later distributing themselment among the men who had volunteered for rescue work. Then he went to the airlock to watch for the breaking up of the storm.

Outside it was night. The thunder and lightning had gone, leaving only the rain and the wind. Gradually, the wind died down and the rain slackened from a heavy downpour to a light drizzle.

Reid looked at Doug Lain who had joined him during the interval of waiting. "Well, I guess we can go out now," he said slowly. His tones were

somher with dread.

The camp, as revealed by the heams of the fluorolites, was a flooded ruin.

Hip-deep water covered everything.

Hip-deep water covered everything. Not a single hut, tent, or lean-to was left standing; all had been demolished in the fury of the storm. Objects of all kinds floated everywhere. Little more than a score of survivors was relead up. Beid found those

all kinds floated everywhere.

Little more than a sore of survivors was picked up. Red found these changes freely to the best shall, predigited the best shall be produced to the state of the state of

exhausted slumber.

MORNING came clear and cold.

After a hasty breakfast of concentrates Reid was once more down at the ravaged camp-site, directing the gruesome task of salvage. By afternoon, all the bodies of the perished had

been recovered and laid out upon the slope. And now Reid knew the full

extent of the damage done.

Almost one-fourth of the Arkites had gone down in that incredible and merciless storm. It was a total that stunned Reid, left him feeling desolate and bitter. His conflict with the Arkites over the city had made him momentarily lose sight of the fact that

they were his people. He had been as proud and lealous of them as a mother hen over a flock of newly-hatched chicks. The loss brought a forceful re-

turn of this feeling, and his emotions touched hitherto unplumbed depths of sadness and recret.

The rest of the day was consumed in hurial of the bodies and the recovery of tools and supplies. A tiny, temporary camp was also set up around and about the Parsec. Early the next morning. Reid and Lain went

begin work upon the engines. Reid scratched his head ruefully as he surveyed the gleaming rows of warn-stenerators. "Any idea of where

to hegin, Doug?" he asked. "You've been puttering around for more than two weeks now."

"Well. I've got a hunch the trouble might lie with the relaxor-relays, We'll take off the housings and trace out the leads and connections of these first. Then-" Lain broke off, listen-

to Reid. "John-sounds like a lot of men were coming down here!"

Reid's face, already engraved by sorrow and suffering, grew deeper lines. "Let them come," he responded metallically. He loosened the blastgun in its bolster. The weapon had somehow managed to remain with him

in spite of everything. "John, you - you're not yoing

through with your plan after all that's happened?" "To the bitter end, Doug, My

dream hasn't lost a bit of its reality." Reid stood there, straight and stiff, while the pound of approaching footsters grew lander. Cold flames swirled in the dark depths of his eyes. And then men were pouring through the engine-room door. Norlin was the first to enter. After him came a com-

pact group of grim-faced Arkites. Norlin strode forward

"Reid, we've come here for a showdown.11

Reid looked at the scout. Norlin had been changed by the storm as all had been changed. His uniform was no longer neat and immaculate: it was wrinkled and torn. His irrepressible

grin was gone, as was the carefree light in bis eyes. His face was set, ominously purposeful.

down into the bowels of the ship to "We know why you both are here," Norlin went on, "You've come to overhaul the engines to take us away from New Terra. Well, we're not going. We've made up our mindswe're going to the city. And you're

going to take us there in the Parsec. What you do after that, none of us cares.25 "This is mutiny1" Reid whispered

fiercely.

"Make of it what you will! We refuse to follow you any longer. If you ing. His face jerked abruptly back won't have any consideration for our well-being while you follow your crazy plans, then we'll have to look out for

ourrelyes "

"XX/AIT a moment, Norlin." Reld leaned forward, his eyes burning into the scout. "Aren't you forgetting something? Aren't you forgetting that I rescued you and all the

rest from the hell that was left of Earth? What do you think your chances would be if you were there now-soft as you all are? Starvation,

plague, madness-death!

"By that very act of saving you, your lives have become my property. You owe me a debt of gratitude that can be paid back only through the strict obedience of my wishes and commands. Have you lost all pride and self-respect, become so degraded and without sense of honor or duty that you'd be willing to forego this debt for the life of luxury and ease

which you imagine the city holds for you?" Reld's bitterly accusing gaze raked the Arkites, and one by one, their eyes dropped before his.

"Don't be fools!" Norlin's voice lashed at them. "I'll admit he saved us, but does this fact make as his slaves? Are we going to be led around by our noses, made to suffer and die, because of a debt? The storm cave

you all a sample of what to expect if you keep on following him. Do you want more of that?" He whirled back

to Reid. "You're mad to exact such payment from us! Your whole plan of leaving New Terra after all that's happened is

insane. We can owe no debt of gratitude to a madman-we cannot be expected to follow him, either,"

"Madman!" Reid was coldly furious. "Is this the only interpretation which you can make of my determination to leave New Terra and having nothing to do with the city? Then you are stupid Norlin! Can't you see that my own personal satisfaction does not enter into it? Can't you see that the

comfort and safety of the Arkites is of no importance whatsoever? It's the future of our race that counts. Everything I've done and intend to do bas been meant for your children and your children's children. If you can't see that, then you're the ones who are mad!" Suddenly all anger left Reid: he became desperately earnest.

"MEN, you've just got to understand that your intention of going to the city is wrong-terribly wrong. It's an unforgivable expression of weakness and cowardice. You'll be making beggars of yourselves, parasites upon another race. You'll be destroying the last hope of a once mighty civilization. What sort of chances do you think your children will have, living among an alien people? And for that matter, what do you think your own chances will be? You don't know a single thing about the people in the city. You can't be certain whether

"We've discussed that Reid." Norlin said coldly. "We're certain we can take care of ourselves." He made a sesture of sudden impatience. "I've had enough of this! We've made up our minds and nothing's going to change them. After the storm, we'd risk anything rather than go further. For the last time, are you going to

you'll be welcomed or killed outright."

Showdown had come, Reid knew. Both pleading and reasoning had failed; there was but one response to make now. Norlin's jaw muscles were clenched whitely, his body taut as a spring wound for instant, furious action. The grimly determined Arkites behind him were making a slow, almost

take us to the city?"

imperceptible movement forward. "Do you know what my answer is?" Reid snapped. "This!" His hand flashed to the holster at his hip, pullterror

Ing the blast-gun free. As straight and steady as though set in rock the weapon covered them. "I'll kill the first one who moves, I swear it! Now listen to me. Both sides of the matter have been presented fully by now, and by all the laws of common sense, mine still remains the right one. If you can't and won't see it that way, then there's only

one—"

"John! Steve! My God, stop it!"
Reid's attention focussed involuntarily upon the source of the cry, his sentence left unfinished. An auburnhaired fury was scratching and clawing
her way into the engine room. It was
Susan, her face vale and twisted with

before him, but the diversion caused by the gif's entrance, even though of less than a second's duration, was a disastrous one for him. The blast-up was smashed suddenly from his grasp, and almost in the same instant the Arise threw themselves upon him in a buttering wave of human fields. Doug Leaing wave of human fields. Doug Leaing wave of human fields. Doug Leaing wave of human fields. Doug Leater of the company of the company of the same of the company of the company of the company of them. In a company of the company of the company of them. In a company of the company of the company of them. In a company of the company of the company of the company of them. In a company of the company

For a moment only was Reid aware of pounding fists and clutching hands, of pain that flashed and roared. The

next, he was plunging abruptly into the ebon depths of unconsciousness.

X/HEN Reid came to, he found him-

Y self in the control room of the Parzec, seated in the pilot chair. He shook his head dazedly, and it was as though the action had upset a bucket of melten metal inside his skull, for droplets of searing pain coursed suddenly along the channels of his nerves. He winced and closed his eyes again, realizing with a dulf furv that his body was so bruised and battered that it was almost one, huge, continuous throbbing

e ache.

Reid stared hard at the instrument
board before him, his eyes settling slowly back into focus. Then a flicker of

motion caught his quickening awareness; he turned to see Norlin appear beside him. In one hand the scout gripped the blast-gun upon which Reid had pinned his last hopes of resistance

"So you're finally awake, eh?" Norlin grunted. "Well, it's about time. We've all been waiting for you to come out of it. Everything's been packed into the ship, and we're ready to move." "Ready—" Reid's lips curled bit-

Reid jerked his eyes back to the men fore him, but the diversion caused by folly through, aren't you, Norlin?"

"Perhaps. But I wouldn't call it folly. I've got this, remember." Norlin brandished the blast-gun. "Now listen, Reid, I'fl have no tricks, see?
You've lost irrevocably, and the least you can do now is to be deem about it.
I'm holding no grudges against you; in fact, when we reach the city, you and Lain will be free to do as you please."
"Where is Lain?"

"Where is Lain?"

"Down in the engine room, waiting for orders. I told you we were ready.

didn't I?"

Reid leaned forward and pressed the signal button of the inter-ship communicator. After a moment a voice buzzed

from the speaker.
"What is it?"

"Doug, is that you?"

"John! Are you all right?"
"Well enough. Doug, hasn't any-

thing been done about the engines?"
"Of course not. You know it's a twoman job. We'll never get down to the
source of the trouble unless we take
them completely apart, and then put
them back together again, cbecking
every detail against our formulae. And,

well-you know how it is. . . ."

"Norlin tells me we're ready to leave at once."

Lain's sigh was just harely audible

through the speaker. "That's what I meant."

Reid swung around to the scout.
"Norlin, something's wrong with the
engines. It won't be safe to move the
ship until the trouble has been found

and corrected."
"You're stalling!" the other snapped.
"If you think you can make a play for

time in order to-"

"Well, if another shake-up's all we can expect, that won't be taking much of a chance. Reid, I've told you we're ready; we won't stand for any delays."

R EID started to speak again, but a glance at Norlin's stubbornly determined face told him it was useless. He turned back to the inter-ship communicator.

"Doug, have you heard everything?"

"Yes, John. I'm afraid we'll just have to risk it, then. Ordinarily, I wouldn't take a chance like this with hyperspace, hut I guess there's nothing else we can do."

Reid's features settled grimly. "All right. Stand by." His fingers played over a bank of keys on the control board. "Signals?"

"All clear."

"Ready, now. I'm turning on

power." Reld puttled down a switch and simultaneously the instrument board before birn lighted up. He depressed an activator stud and now a deep hum spread throughout the ship. He watched the progress of an indicator along the face of one of the meters on the control hoard, his hand ready upon a lever. When the indicator reached the stop, he puttled the lever forward. The hum rose to a shrill whine; there was a sudden sensation of motion—

change. Another indicator moved and came to rest. Reid turned. "We're in hyper-

space."
"No tricks, now!" Norlin warned.
"Tricks?" Reid snorted contemptuously. "You're in my power out here,
Norlin, and don't forget it. One wrong
move upon these controls would kill us

move upon these controls would kill us all instantly and hortihly. But there would be no point to it; either here or in the city, the last hope of our civilization dies. I wouldn't want to be the one responsible for it. Your own senseless determination will take care of that."

trol hoard again. He pressed a button beneath what appeared to he a large, concave mirror. This was the hyperson of the property had compiled their of the hyperty had been appeared to the hyperty had been always the hyperty hyperty had been always the hyperty hyperty had been always the hyperty hyperty

Now the hypervon lighted up. In its

center, tiny, though sharp and clear, appeared the flooded campsite and the rise upon which the Parsec had rested. This was all that was visible; the outer edges of the screen remained grey and featureless, flickering weirdly with light and shadow.

R EID touched the control stick and the scene changed abruptly. Mountain, plain, and forest appeared and vanished with incredible rapidity. For a longer time there was the deep blue of water. Then the mountains of the other continent appeared and swelled into size. Soon they were within the bay, and Reid cut their progress

to a crawl, following the shoreline.

"Lord!" Norlin whispered, watching
the hypervon in awe. "And to think
it took us almost three days to get here
in the auxiliary!"

And then the city appeared, a tippicture of perfection. Just within slight of its outlying farmlands, Reld returned the control sitck to neutral. He operated a series of switches and buttons, and gradually the ground below the Parzea as seen in the bypervon grew in size and detail. He took up the size and set of the property of the series of the series of the ward. Finally a road that gleand with the hue of metal appeared on the serten.

"We're on the outskirts of the city," Reid said.

Notlin nodded eagerly. "Land here." As Reld prepared to feld in the warpfield and return the Parsez to normal space, he paused, gripped by a sudden premonition of disaster. The trip thus far had been without danger, but he remembered that it was just at this point on the previous voyage that the shake-up had taken place. There had been no serious consequences, other than the mere fact of the occurrence, the than the mere fact of the occurrence but he felt that a repetition might not be so fortunate.

Suddenly Reid shrugged; he had nothing to lose. Everything had been lost already. He reached out to the control board again and began to draw

back the power release lever, watching the meters and gauges on the instrument panel.

The field was folding in: the indica-

tors flickered toward their stops. Reid held his breath tensely. It happened, then, just as he had

subconsciously felt it would. There was a sudden, ear-piercing whine that rose into inaudibility, became a vibration that tingled painfully along his nerves. The Parzez was shaken with abrupt violence, and Reid, clutching desperately at his seat, saw the hyperton flare with intolerable brightness. Simultaneously, there came the sound of a terrific explosion. Scarcely had the echoes of this died away, when Reid was thrown out of the nilot chair Reid was thrown out of the nilot chair.

Sickened, stunned, Reid groped to his feet. Across the room, Norlin was arising painfully out of the corner into which he had been thrown. Everything was very still. And then Reid stiffened, paralyzed

by a great crash.

with sudden, chilling horror. He darted to the inter-ship communicator. "Doug!" he cried. "Doug! Answer me!"

me!"

HE STRAINED INS ears with the intensity of his listening, but no sound came from the speaker. He turned and ran crazily from the room, his breath sobbling in his throat. Only a very small part of him was aware that Norlin followed.

Reid reached the engine room to find smoke pouring from the door in thick, black clouds. The air was actid with the smell of ozone. The interior was a shambles of destruction. Flame had blackened and seared the walls. The engine housings had been blown entirely off and the delicate inner mechanisms lay scattered all over the room. blasted into fragments.

Finally Reid's eyes settled upon the charred body of Doug Lain. He walked forward slowly, his face a gray, lined death-mask. Everything became very motionless and quiet.

"Doug!" he whispered. "We could have gone on together, you and I. There's so much we could have seen. so much we could have talked about. And now-" Reid's voice ended brokenly. After a time he looked up. His

gaze fixed upon Norlin standing woodenly in the engine room doorway. "You did this!" Reid accused in low.

terrible tones. "You killed him just as surely as if you had blasted him with the gun you're holding. If you had listened to me this would never have happened," Reid stalked toward the scout, his hands spread like talons. His eyes burned with a light as awful as the very fires of hell.

Norlin's face paled. "I didn't know!" he gasped. "I tell you, I didn't realize-"

Reid's forward progress was the slow and inevitable one of death itself.

"Reid, wait! Let me explain." But Reid did not halt, did not waver.

He came on. Norlin broke; he released an inarticulate cry, whirled, and ran from the engine room. He fled as if every fear known to man since the dawn of time had suddenly taken on form and substance to pursue him. He had forgotten the blast-gun in his hand, had forgotten everything save his insane desire to get away from the hideous, con-

Like an automaton Reid continued onward. And then, suddenly, the supernal fury died out of him. Just at

the foot of the ladder which led to the upper deck he collapsed, crumpling slowly like a man grown abruptly old and weak. He lay there motionlessly. his head huried in his arms

He had lost-utterly, completely, beyond all hope of recovery. His dream of transplanting civilization and watching it bud had failed. By now the Arkites were within the city, their first step toward racial destruction

having been taken. With Doug Lain he might have found solace, traveling in the Parsec to all the numberless, glittering stars of the universe. But Doug Lain was dead and the Parsec would never travel again. There was nothing left for him. Nothing, except-

"John!"

HE LIFTED his head wearily, mechanically. Someone was calling him, Susan, But what difference did it make? He had lost Susan, too. "John! Where are you?"

A dim response of emotion stirred within him. Susan's voice was sharp and strained. Something was wrong. He shook himself out of the numb-

ness of despair. What could be wrong? He remembered, suddenly, having warned the Arkites against the inhabitants of the city. His eyes widened. Could the Arkites have been attacked?

Strength and spirit came back to him in a rush. He rose to his feet and climbed up the ladder. He gained the upper deck in time to see Susan turn a corner at the lower end of the passageway. "Susan!" he called.

The girl reappeared, her face lighting in relief. "Oh, John, I've heen suming fire that blazed in Reid's eyes. looking all over for you!" She hurried toward him breathlessly.

"What's wrong?" Reid demanded. "The city!" she gasped, "The city, John. It-it's gone!" "Gone?" Reid stared at her bewilderedly. Abruptly be whirled and

bounded toward the airlock. Bright, afternoon sunlight poured down upon him as he jumped to the ground outside the ship. He looked quickly about him, his eyes widening with

shock and disbelief. Incredibly, amazingly, it was true.

The city had vanished! Reid stared in all directions, his senses whirling in confusion. The Parsec should have been resting upon a gleaming, metal road. Huge, multicolored buildings should have been

towering before bim. But there was no road, There were no buildings. Reid looked out upon an immense plain, covered with waving grasses. At its outer fringes a

great, dark forest spread. In the hazy distance, gigantic mountains soared majestically into the green sky.

Mountain, plain, and forest were as Reid remembered them. He turned his bead. Yes-and there was the great curve of the bay, its waters lapping gently at the white sand of the shore. Except for the disappearance of the city, the scene had changed but little.

FOR the first time, now, Reid became conscious of the Arkites standing all around bim. They were subdued and bewildered, their eyes anxious and questioning. Their glances fell before

his shamefacedly. "Where's Norlin?" Reid asked.

"He ran down there somewhere," one of the Arkites volunteered, "He came running out of the ship as though he'd gone crazy. When he saw the city was gone, he let out a yell and started running. We called to him but he didn't stop. After a while we lost sight of him." The man shrugged.

"He was a trouble-maker anyway. We shouldn't have listened to him." Susan's voice sounded abruptly beside Reid. "John, are you sure this is the exact place where you and Steve

saw the city?" "No doubt of it," Reid answered,

"There just couldn't be another place like this on the entire planet. And just before the accident occurred, the city was just beneath the ship, relatively speaking, of course. The field was almost cone, so weak that it just

couldn't have moved the ship for more than a few feet." "But, John, what could have happened? Why did the city vanish like

that?" Reid's eves clouded with thought.

"I think I know," he said slowly. The Arkites gathered around him in

an eager, attentive circle. He was their leader again. His words were something to heed, and they tried to show, like the children they really were, that henceforth they would heed them. They listened. "Doug Lain and I built the warp-

generators under terrific pressure. Reid began, "Almost from beginning to end. It was a constant race against time and the destructiveness of man. It was only to be expected, therefore, that some mistakes should creen in-Just what these were, we'll never know,

"In some way, our long run through byperspace here to Alpha Centauri's system made these mistakes crop out forcefully. They altered the principle

of the generators so that they produced a warp which allowed travel not only through hyperspace, but through time also. In what manner the two are linked I can only guess. They may interlock, run in parallel planes, or they may be one and the same thing.

"Anyway, in the instant upon

emerging from hyperspace into Alpha's system, the intensity of the warp-field was such that the Parter was snanned through time. Instead of emerging at almost the same period that we first entered, we dld so at one which I estimate as being approximately 500 years in the future!"

REID looked at the Arkites, and suddenly his eyes were glowing.

"Listen closely now. You all are aware of the fact that animal life here on New Terra hasn't as yet reached a very high point of development. This can only mean that the builders of the

city were not natives of New Terra! "Then who were they? They were intelligent. They resembled us. They built only one city, whereas if they were a race native to this world they'd have had hundreds, in addition to towns and roads. Can you Imagine that a race canable of building a city like that wouldn't also be able to navigate the great oceans and spread out to the other continents? They didn't do so because of the fact that expansion wasn't necessary-there weren't enough of them to make it necessary. In the thousands of years that it takes a race to achieve civilization, could it he possible for their numbers to remain

Reid looked at the Arkites. Their eves were clowing, too. They know

only one continent?"

Reid went on swiftly, "When the Parsec emerged from hyperspace over the city, it was snapped through time once more, to the same extent as previously but in the opposite direction. We were returned to the point in time where we should originally have emerged. As a result, the city had vanished. It hadn't as yet been built!" His voice became deep and vibrant.

"That was our city! We are the huilders! Through a strange quirk of fate, we saw the crowning result of our work-the work which we will hegin now and which our children will carry on after us. Our civilization will not nerish after all."

For a moment there was silence. Then one of the Arbites ventured

timidly: "Would it be possible for us to go

hack to the city?" Reld smiled sadly, "The second

shake-up not only snapped us back through time, but also strained the engines to the point where their inherent flaws caused them to explode. They're ruined, utterly and completely. Doug Lain, who might have beloed me rehuild them, was killed in the explosion. I could never do the job alone in all the years of life left to me.

"No, we'll never be able to return to the city. Let us keep it in mind only as an inspiration. Our work lies clearly before us. The foundation for the city must be laid. That and that alone should henceforth occupy our

thoughts."

The Arkites looked at the plain and the forests. They looked up at the sky. And Reid knew they saw neither plain, forest, nor sky. They looked through these things with the dreamso few as to huild only one city, inhabit ing eyes of a race, and the vision they saw was one of glittering, sky-high towers and a people grown happy and wise in their greatness.

> ONE by one, the Arkites went into the Parsec. The women came out with pots and pans and haskets of food. They began clearing spaces for fires. The men came out with axes and saws slung over their shoulders. They moved off toward the forests, and presently there came busy sounds of chopning and sawing.

Everywhere Reid looked, the Arkites were absorbing themselves in some small task, gladly, willingly. Life for them had suddenly taken on purpose and meaning

Reid felt a light touch on his arm; he turned to see Susan looking up at him, her grey eyes shining moistly,

"John-they're happy!" she whispered incredulously.

"A building people are always a happy people, Susan. All the Arkites ever needed was a goal toward which to direct their efforts-something more than merely the dream of one man, something which they could visualize for themselves. They have that, now."

"And I've found something, too, John." The shining, grey eyes still looked up at him. Reid glanced away, troubled

to find that this girl could still make his heart ache in spite of the happiness that had finally come to him. "I'm glad," he said huskily, "This is a new beginning for you, too, I sup-

pose. Steve Norlin will be back, of course, and then you'll have your own home and-" "You are blind, aren't you, John?

And you're wrong about Steve. No: he won't be back. He was really in love with himself, you see. Loss of the city meant an end to his hones of comfort and leisure, and there just wasn't anything else left for him." Susan shook her suburn head "He won't be back."

Reid had a sense of foreboding as

he looked into her eyes, wide and dark with the age-old intuition of woman He was to remember this feeling forcefully several weeks later when Norlin's hody was discovered in the forest, its head blown off by the blast-gun. But at the present it was crowded aside by

a sudden, heart-quickening thrill, "You-you don't care?" he cried. Her grev eyes smiled again, "No,

John. I stopped caring that day I asked you if you wanted me. Oh, you should have seen your face! That was what I learned-real love. You wanted me, but the race came first. And I knew you were right, John, though I did want to belo the Arkites. I realized, then, that what Steve was doing was wrong: I knew that if I had offered myself to him in order to prevent him from going to the city, that he'd have refused me. It was his own well-

being that concerned him most: he had no real thought for the Arkites," Susan was silent a moment. When she snoke seain her voice was very soft.

"Well, I'm here if you still want me."

"Still want you? Why-" Reid choked inarticulately; the words he wanted to say were so full with affirmation that they stuck in his throat. Music throbbed in his veins. And then, somehow, she was in his arms and his cheek was pressed to her hair, and there was no longer need to say anything.

THE END

THAR'S GOLD . . . !

EMINISCENT of the old gold rush days K is a new announcement—in an even more picturesque setting than exciting Yukon! From South Africa comes the report that a gold reel lost 40 years ago in the old working of the Southern Van Ryn Mine in the Klerksdorp district has been rediscovered. According to the public statement of an official of the mine, the precious ore was found banging like icicles from femal make throughout a dutance of 100 feet Samples taken have shown this ore to contain 70 per cent pure gold! It has already been found that this ore can easily be assayed without the usual reduction of gold value. Sorry, Mister, there are no ships leaving for South Africa tonight!

AMAZING FACTS

By A. MORRIS

TESTING FOR FUTURE DELINQUENTS IT IS the opinion of Mr. H. Ashley Weeks, of the State College of Washington, that by using questionnaires that will bridg out important points about the home and school background of America

points move the route and tender chaptering of American children an experienced sociological compression whether an experienced sociological compression whether children will become decrease the compression of the children compression whether compression whether compression compression control of the compression compression control compression control cont

can be educated to refrain from going astray. A LARGE BABY

A LTHOUGH many bables weigh more than the average 7 pounds at birth, it is very rare indeed when one bits 19 pounds which was the weight of a bully boy delivered a few years ago to a North Carolina mether.

THE WARRIOR ANT

quite common. These soldiers do not work other than defend the home nest when challenged by invaders. A soldier ant may have two hig weapons with which to overcome his enemies. In all cases, the soldier ant has a strong set of mandibles. However, in some cases be may have an auxiliary weapon. This auxiliary weapon has been analyzed by chemiets to consist of formic acid. The soldier ant generally uses the acid in either of two ways. As an irritant the acid is sprayed into a wound inflicted by the mandble. This aggravates the wound to the extent of the actual disablement of the enemy. The acid may also be used to paralyze the membranes in the hig joiets of an opponent. In this type of an attack, the ant first begins by pulling the legs of his opponent with such a force that the membranes in the leg joints become tightened. Once the membranes are tight the formic acid is ready for use. This acid when suraved upon the tightened membranes causes temporary paralysis or death.

WHAT A LIFE!

THE following is a list of some of the representative commodities in London during the seventeenth century, together with their prices:

pair of shoes	ten ce	a
leg of mutton		
whole sheep	fifty or	ai
loin of heef	filteen ce	al
whole lamb	fifteen ce	ol
loaf of bread		
n overcost	fifty ce	en/

No, there was no thought of inflation in those days!

FIRE-PROOFING FABRICS

THE threat that our cities might be subject to a hall of incendiary bombs has given added impetus to the search for a substance that will make fabrics fire proof. The Du Pent Company has built a new factory in Gresselli. N. I.

which is producing ammonium sulfamate, a chemical that will make fabrics free-resistant. It can be applied to clothing and draperies just as easily as the housestic now starches them and it can be sprayed on the upholitery. This unbeface can be upon to make the fabrics

This substance can be used to make the fabrics in the homes safe from fire started by incendiary hombs or other causes and will also be used in theaters, halls, meeting places, hotels, restaurants, etc., to increase the protection for their patrons.

BORN TO DESTROY IF YOU'VE seen "The Good Earth," you know

I what locusts are. These insects are known for thir mass migrations (probably in search of food), and extraordinary accounts are on record of the vast swarms that from time to time invade particular districts. Locusts cited exceptitings off the surface of the ground, on these expeditions, and have on several occasions caused disastrous

The item of interest about these creatures, bowever, is that there is no "training period" in their life of destruction. Unlike other insects and animals, locusts do not go through several stages of development before they achieve adult status. Almost the same minage they are batched, the larvae commence their destructive career!

Never TRUST

44 ROBERT BLOCH

Snartch conjured up a demon and set out to make his dreams come true. But he overlooked one very important factor...

"I GUESS I'm just no good as a carpenter," said Mr. Snartch, as he sawed the woman in half.
"Look at this sloppy stroke!" he muttered, as he hacked through the lady's hips.

this under his breath, because an audience isn't supposed to hear such comments from a stage magician. And Mr. Snartch was a stage magician, travelling under the name of Jeffrey the Great. As Jeffrey the Great, he had to saw a woman in half every night, and twice



A DEMON



a week at matinees, and he was getting pretty sick of it. The first few times were fun, but now it was just plain drudgery. Sometimes he hardly had the ambition to put the lady back together again at the end of the show. And of course, such a thing would be had. If it kept bappening, he would not only get a poor reputation as a magician, but he would also lose a lot of partners. So tonight he hurried through his act,

sawing away like mad, and then put the pieces together in record time. Mr. Spartch wanted to finish the show

and get back to his magic. That was Jeffrey Snartch's salvation.

His only hobby-magic. Not stage magic, but real magic. Black magic. Not the hocus-pocus variety, but the genuine article, Sorcery, Necromancy. Tonight he was particularly anxious

to get away from the theatre because he had just discovered a swell new formula for conjuring up a demon. Perhaps it wasn't a swell new form-

ula, exactly. It was more of a swell old formula, and Jeffrey Snartch discovered it in a very ancient book, printed in Latin.

So he finished his performance in a hurry and ran out of the theatre and over to bis hotel room where he had

the book hidden under the mattress. He had translated the particular spell he was interested in, and written it out on a piece of hotel stationery, along with a list of things he had to use in order to make the incantation work.

"Let me see," said Mr. Snartch. "I will need some toad's blood and some sacramental wine and some chalk to draw a pentagon with and five black candles and mandrake roots to burn." So he put on his hat and coat and went out on a shopping trip. Half an hour later he was back in his room with the bundles. He spread everything out on the bed and pulled down the shades.

"Of course, I didn't manage to get exactly the right things," be confessed to himself. "But I guess they are just

as good." Instead of toads, Mr. Snartch had to

buy some frogs at a pet shop. Naturally, he couldn't buy sacramental wine, but he figured on using a little grape juice instead. He had the chalk, though, and the candles. Of course, the candles weren't black ones. They were birthday candles-but it was all the store had. And Mr. Spartch didn't even know what mandrake roots look like-so he just stepped into a vacant lot and pulled up a handful of weeds.

"But I guess it will be all right," Mr. Snartch kept reassuring himself,

CO HE took bis translation of instructions and began to do what the book told him. He drew a pentagon and lighted the candles and mixed up some frog's blood and grape juice and set fire to his weeds in a tray. Of course, there were a lot of technical things he had to do with all this, but the important thing is-in half an hour he had his room in one hell of a mess

Then he turned out the lights and began to chant his formula out loud by

the light of the candles.

It was very dark and frightening in the hotel room, and the birthday candles cast some very unusual shadows. The air was filled with the smell of the burning weeds.

But Mr. Snartch didn't worry. He was an old hand at wizard's work, and he just read his Latin, rolling out the syllables, and hoped for the best,

He got the worst. When he finished with the Latincheating a hit now and then, where be didn't understand how to pronounce the words-he started to make the necessary passes in the air. And that's when it happened.

Suddenly the curtains began to hlow. This was unusual, because the windows

were all closed. Then the shadow appeared on the wall. Some one else was in the room! This was unusual, hecause all the doors

were locked. Mr. Snartch looked at the shadow. Then he blinked. He looked again and

saw what cast the shadow. Then he velled.

"Ecceowie!" velled Mr. Snartch. "Not bad at all," said a voice. "The last man who saw me didn't vell at all.

He merely jumped out of the window." "Candidly, that's what I'd like to do," chattered Snartch. "The only trouble is, the windows are locked. And my knees are tremhling too hard for me

to jump." "So I notice," said the voice, "Hold

on now, I'm coming out into the light." Mr. Snartch watched the figure coming forth against the candle light. That is, he started to watch it from where he stood. But he ended up hy peering at it from under the bed. He crawled there in a hurry when he got a good look at what he had conjured up.

For a minute he could hardly speak. "Bless my soul," he whispered. "Bless my soul!"

"Sorry," said the voice. "That's not exactly in my department. "Maybe I'd

better go." "I didn't mean to offend you," said Mr. Snartch, hastily, as he came out from under the bed and stood up. "It's

only that you sort of overwhelmed me." "Did I really?" said the voice, with a pleased chuckle, "Well, well," "You're pretty awful, you know,"

said Snartch. "Am I?' cooed the voice. "Am I

ghastly?"

"Frightful!" exclaimed Mr. Snartch. "Oh, you're just trying to flatter me," simpered the voice.

"Not at all," Snartch insisted. "You're really and truly hideous."

The demon was hideous.

HE SQUATTED there in the center of the floor. His hody was lean, mean, green, ohscene. A vast hulk, toadlike, with slick reptilian skin. He had webbed feet and claws, fringed with moss at the cuticle. He looked as though he had been pickled a long,

long time ago.

His face, as faces go, just didn't. Imagine a green skull with vellow eves

and you get the idea. You can have it. Mr. Snartch felt the same way. The more he looked, the less he liked his

visitor. The demon crouched forward, ex-

tending his grinning face on a stalk-like neck. A forked tongue licked forth between fretted lips. He looked as though he were crouching to spring.

Mr. Snartch stepped hastily back inside the pentagon, which was to protect him from the demon.

"You can't cross the line of chalk or go between the candles," he whispered. "Stop looking at me that way!"

"What way?" whined the demon. "All I wanted was a glass of water. Can't you see my tongue is hanging out? I've had a long, hard trip,"

"Try some of this," Snartch suggested, pointing to the bowl of from blood and grape juice.

"Ah!" said the demon. "That's more like it."

"Vitamins," said Snartch. "Yes, it was a terrible journey," the

demon sighed, between gulps, "Whirling across space that way. And then wriggling between dimensions. It's not easy when you get to be my age."

"I can imagine," sighed Mr. Snartch, sympathetically.

"Besides, I haven't been getting any calls now for a long time," the demon confessed. "I'm out of practise,"
"Really?" said Mr. Snartch,

"Really?" said Mr. Snartch,
"Yes. You know what's happened to

sorcery in the last few centuries. It's fallen off terrihly. Nobody even practises witchcraft. Say, by the way, how did you happen to run across my address?"

dress?"
"In this book," Mr. Snartch explained, pulling the volume out of his pocket. "Ever see it?"

The demon cocked his head thoughtfully.

"Of course. It used to get me a lot of trade several hundred years ago. Now nobody seems to read it any more.

This modern age!"
He sighed, like an air-raid warning.

"Mind if I sit down?" he asked. "I'm tired out from the trip."
"Go ahead." said Mr. Snartch, hos-

pitahly. "You are pretty old, aren't you?"

"Just look at me," groaned the demon.

MR. SNARTCH didn't want to look at the demon, but he managed to stand the sight for several minutes. He noted the wrinkles in the demon's face, the flabhy pouches on his arms and legs where muscles had once flexed, Vari-

cose veins stood out prominently.
"'Ook 'ere," rasped the demon.
"Ook af my teef. Mof of 'em are
miffing."

Sure enough, only a few hig yellow stumps remained in the demon's mouth. "Too bad," Mr. Snartch sympa-

"Too bad," Mr. Snartch sympathized.
"Yes. I can hardly eat a thing any more," the demon confided. "I just

nihhle at an arm or leg now and then."
"You do," wheezed Snartch, turning
pale. "Just—nibhle—you say."

"Nihble," repeated the demon.

Mr. Snartch suddenly dropped all notions of becoming friendly with his

guest from Gehenna. He trembled anew and hugged the safety of the pentagon. "Well," he said. "This is all very interesting, but it isn't getting us anywhere. Pretty soon the candles will hurn down—they're only hirthday can-

dles, you notice—and then you can step across and get me. In order to avoid that, I think we'd better get our

business out of the way right now."
"To be sure," said the demon. "Of
course," He squatted on his haunches

and rubbed his hands together thoughtt fully. "What can I do for you, sir?" he inquired.

Mr. Spartch cleared his throat per-

 Mr. Snartch cleared his throat nervously.
 Here it was! It was all true, then.

5. Here it was: It was an true, then.
Mr. Snartch could actually get what the old books promised! He had a genuine dead-alive demon at his command.
't What did he want?

"Money," said Snartch. "I want a lot of money."

"A wise choice," said the demon.
"I'll just put you down for say—a million dollars?"

"And the income tax," Jeffrey Snartch added, hastily.

"And the income tax. Very well."
"In return, of course, you'll want

something?" said Mr. Snartch.
"Naturally." The demon's eyes
sparkled. "Let's have a look at you
now, Hmmm. You're nice and plump.

I think I would enjoy you."
"Enjoy me?"
"Enjoy eating you, I should say."

"I should say not!" Mr. Snartch turned pale. His eyes narrowed. "I have hardening of the arteries," he said. This was a life.

But the demon paused. Mr. Snartch quickly followed up his advantage. "Besides, I am a heavy smoker," he

"Besides, I am a heavy smoker," he remarked. "And you know what the cannihals of New Guinea say."

"No, I don't. What do they say?"

"That smokers bave an unpleasant tobacco taste."

"I see "

"Also," added Snartch, " I wouldn't like to hurt those teeth of yours. You aren't so young any more. You might have trouble with bones." He shook his head. "Really, as your friend, I'd feel very guilty about letting you eat

me."

"Well, if you put it that way-" "Why not take my soul?" suggested Mr. Snartch, "Give me my million, plus taxes, and six months. Then take my soul. It's a better deal, I think."

"All right," said the demon. "I'll buy that. Would you mind signing

bere, please?" A LITTLE black book appeared in the demon's claws. He tossed it

across the pentagon. Mr. Spartch took out bis pen. "Blood, please," insisted the demon.

"Let's make this thing legal." Mr. Snartch pricked his finger and

wrote his name. Then he tossed the book back.

"Thank you," said the demon. "See you later with that million," He disappeared, Mr. Snartch sighed.

Suddenly the demon's head glimmered in the air before him.

inquired. "Oh, any way at all," Snartch told

him. "Large bills will do. Just so I get it soon." "To hear is to obey," hissed the

demon. The head disappeared. Mr. Spartch breathed a sigh of mingled relief and regret. Then he set about re-arranging the room. It took him quite a while to clean up and restore order. By that time it was very late. He lay down on the bed and went to sleep.

When he woke up it was daylight.

"Oh oh!" thought Mr. Snartch. "I'll be late for the show at the theatre

today."

He'd forgotten about the matinee. Dressing hastily, he ran out of the hotel lobby in a frenzy and hailed a

passing cab. "Grand Theatre!" he velled.

The show bad already started when he arrived. Myra, his assistant-the lady be sawed in half-was anxiously

awaiting him. "Oh, Jeffrey!" she wailed. "What

happened to you?" Jeffrey Snartch shrugged feebly. He wasn't exactly pleased by her solici-

tude. A very determined type of woman, Myra. And apparently she had determined to marry him. He avoided her whenever possible, never talking to her. Their only intimate contact came when he sawed ber up.

Snartcb put on his dress clothes and emerged again as the magician. Jeff-

rey the Great.

The band was playing for the opening of his act. Quickly he arranged props with Myra. Then be strode out on the stage.

During all this time he had no chance to remember the events of last night. He was too busy, too rushed. Once on the stage the audience "How do you want the money?" be claimed bis attention.

> TEFFREY SNARTCH started out with a few card tricks and a couple of bandkerchief bits. As he went through the business and recled out the patter, his thoughts hlurred. He followed through his paces as a matter of routine.

Absent-mindedly, he waved his arms, feeling for the gimmicks which controlled a rabbit, flowers, and a boiled dinner which would be produced from his sleeve

He made a few passes and let the

first object slide into his hand.

"I have here a rabbit," he said.

The audience laughed.

"I have here a—what the—"

"I have here a—what the—"
Snartch stared at his hands. There
was no rabbit in his paim. Instead,

bis fingers clutched a wad of yellow hills. Thousand dollar bills!

Again, automatically, he gestured.

Again, automatically, "A rabbit!" be muttered.

No rabbit. Another package of bills. The audience bowled. "All right," said Snartch, desperately. "No rabbit. But I kope got a

lot of lettuce!"

The laugh that followed won the audience once more. Desperately Snartch wriggled around. What in

Snartch wriggled around. What in blazes bad happened to that rabbit? He patted his coat. Another wad of bills flew out. And then another. He

scarcely noticed.

Again he clutched at his shirt, seek-

ing for the elusive bunny. Money showered on the stage. Desperately now, he wondered if the

rabbit bad wandered into his trousers. He shook his trouser-legs. There was a furious clanking, and a flood of gold pieces dropped from his

trousers. The audience hooted and screamed.

So did Snartch.

As he attempted to bow, greenbacks burst from his waist, cascaded from under his yest, poured from his pock-

ets. He stood knee-deep in currency as the curtains fell. Indignant voices rose around him.

Indignant voices rose around him.

The stage manager ran out, cursing.

"What the hell's the big idea?" de-

manded that worthy.

Then he stared at the money.

"Jeez, it's real!" he gasped. Snartch grinned. Suddenly he realized wbat had happened. The demon's promise—one million dollars! He'd chosen a unique way to deliver it. "Of course it's real," Snartch cbuckled, scooping up bills like mad. "And so is this."

"What?" Snartch tweaked the stage man-

ager's nose.
"My resignation," he said. "As of today. Now. I quit. I retire."
Leaving the manager gogging.

Snartch strode off the stage, carrying bis cash.

Myra waited for him in the wings. "What's this?" she sobbed. "You can't really mean you're through?" "But I do mean it." Snartch said.

"But I do mean it," Snartch said, trying not to be unkind. "I don't know just how to tell you this, Myra, but I bave sawed you in half for the last

"What will I do?" whispered the girl. "Without you around to saw me,

I'll just go to pieces."

"Maybe you can find somebody
else to saw you," Snartch consoled her.
"A nice young girl like you. Anybody

"A nice young girl like you. Anybody would be proud to slice you up." She sobbed after him as he collected his belongings.

"It won't be the same," she moaned.
"No matter what happens, I'll always
be thinking of you and bow you dismembered me."

"Take this, kid," said Snartch, pressing a handful of gold pieces into ber paim.

"Where are you going?"
"To my country estate," Snartch

"Country estate? You baven't got a country estate."
"I will have." Snartch grinned.

"Soon."

And be did.

SNARTCH went to the realtor's office. From there he proceeded to a haberdasher's, and ordered one bundred suits, to be delivered at the address of his new country estate. On a sudden impulse he went out and bought a vacht. Not that he needed one-he just felt like it. Besides, one of his suits was a white tropical that

went well with a vacht. After that, he invested in a limousine, a roadster, a diamond-studded wrist watch, and five hundred cases

of Scotch whiskey. All of which was to be sent C.O.D. to his new address. He felt very pleased by his day's work, and decided

to relax in a night club. He relaxed very pleasantly there.

Anybody who tips waiters with twentydollar gold pieces can get excellent service.

Jeffrey Snartch woke up the next morning with a definite hangover. He was in bed at his new estate, and he wanted to stay there.

But the doorhell began to buzz at nine o'clock, and kept huzzing all day. Delivery men and drivers began to arrive with his new possessions, and Snartch stood at the door paying off in cash. All in all, he managed to get rid of a lot of money. The men came to sign over the house, and somebody else arrived to report that his vacht was ready in the lagoon.

Snartch paid with a smile, though his head huzzed. Finally the tumult and the shouting died. He lay down on the sofa to enjoy what remained of his hangover. And then the doorhell rang again.

Snartch answered it. A pugnacious-looking truck driver

greeted him with a truculent sneer. "What is it?" asked Spartch The truck-driver scowled. "I was

here earlier today," he growled. "Brought yez that there Scotch." "What about it? I paid you, didn't

17" "Yeah. Yez paid me, all right. In

marked bills,"

"Marked hills?"

"Sure. Look." A grimy hand held out vellow currency. Mr. Snartch examined it. Yes, it was marked, all

right. "Where'd yez steal it?" muttered

the truck driver. "Steal it?" gasped Mr. Snartch, "I

didn't steal anything." "This dough is stolen!" harked the

truck driver. "Take it back." "Wait a minute," Snartch gulped.

"The phone is ringing." It was. He trotted down the hall

and answered. The voice on the other end of the wire helonged to the man who had sold him the yacht.

"Mr. Snartch?" "Speaking."

"You hought a yacht from us for \$200,000? Remember?"

"That's right."

"You paid cash."

this matter."

"Why not?" "Mr. Snartch, where did you get that money? We've just checked the

currency and found it marked." "I--I--" "Mr. Snartch, did you know that it is necessary for us to report such bills to the Federal authorities? They plan to call on you this afternoon regarding

"Fine," said Mr. Snartch, "Swell. I'll expect them. I'll bake them a cake."

HE HUNG up. Down the hall he saw the truck-driver muttering over his money.

Mr. Snartch shrugged and sighed. He couldn't explain this. Something was wrong. But he didn't want to ex-

plain it, or find out what was wrong, All he wanted was out. Mr. Snartch tiptoed into the library

and got out, through the window,

He sneaked into his limousine and drove down the drive. Then he tore hell-for-leather into town

drove down the drive. Then he tore hell-for-leather into town.

He registered at the hotel where he had conjured up the demon. Then he

went out and bought some supplies.

Promptly at midnight that night he

evoked his supernatural side-kick.

The demon crouched outside the

chalk pentagon in the gloom and sighed wearily. But Mr. Snartch did not show any pity. He did not invite the demon to sit down. He didn't even offer a drink. He just stared and tapped his foot accusingly. "You sent for me?" rasped the de-

mon, at length.
"You know I did," Snartch snapped.

"What do you desire? Is there anything wrong?"

"You know what's wrong."
The demon blushed a deeper green.

"Oh. About that money, I suppose? I can explain that, You see, I—"
"Never mind," said Mr. Snartch,

bitterly. "The deal's off. Breach of contract. You know I'm in the right." The demon squinted at him. A diffi-

cult thing to do, for the demon had no eyelids.

"Wait a minute," he said, softly.

"Wait a minute," he said, sottly.
"Wait a minute. Money isn't everything, you know. We could work
something out."

"What?" said Mr. Snartch, "Power," purred the demon. "You want power, perhaps? A lot of men are eager for power these days. Take

are eager for power these days. Take that fellow Hitler," he hinted. Mr. Snartch made a face. "Not for me." he said ahruptly. "Power like

me," ne said anrupny. "Power that wouldn't interest me a bit." "How about—women?"

"How abor

"I could get you the most beautiful women of history," the demon coaxed. "Think of it! Helen of Troy. Cleopatra. Du Barry. Madame Pompadour. Josephine."

"You could?" said Mr. Snartch. He was thinking of Myra. Anything would be a relief after Myra.

"How would you like to be a great lover?" hinted the demon. He was

on the right track now, and he smelled a sale. He hurried to close the deal. "Gorgeous girls," he chanted. "Fond blondes. Brunette pets. Redheads salore."

"Yes," said Mr. Snartch, suddenly.

"Yes. I'd like that."

"Of course," said the demon, glibly,
"this is a special deal, and it will mean
that your time is shortened. Instead

of a six-month contract I must reduce my offer to three months." Mr. Snartch smiled.

"That will be all right," he said. "Take hack your money and bring on

the girls."
The demon nodded.

"No more tricks, though," warned in, Jeffrey Snartch. "Cute tricks," giggled the demon.

"Then he disappeared. Only the giggle remained.

Snartch cleaned up the mess thoughtfully and went to bed.

AS A RESULT of his hangover and unusual exertions, he slept more soundly than usual. To tell the truth, when he awoke it was night once again.
Mr. Snartch had slept the clock

around.

He rose, blinked, and went into the bathroom to shave. After shaving he bathed, leisurely. By the time he was dressed it was almost nine o'clock. He stepped back into his hotel room.

Then he reeled back into the bath-

Sitting on Mr. Snartch's hed, chair, and bureau, were six girls. Two hlondes, two brunettes, and two redheads.

All were of different types. Short, tall, fat, lean, frail, husky. But all had one thing in common. A costume consisting of rhinestones. A few here. a few there. But the costumes were similar

the girls. Mr. Snartch staggered in the door-

way. They looked up at him. "All right," demanded a tall red-

head, in a busky voice, "What's the big idea, mister?"

"Why, don't you know what the hig idea is?" asked Mr. Snartch.

"No, we don't," insisted the redhead. "Here we are, sitting in our dressing room getting ready for the first floor show, when this guy shows up with a gun-" "What guy?"

"How should I know? He wore a mask. Besides, he didn't give us a chance to look at him. Just made us go out the back door and climb into a taxi. Then he drove us here, took us up the freight elevator, and smuggled us into your room. He locked the door from the outside."

"Kidnaper." screeched a little blonde. "That's what he was. A kidnaper."

"Taking us from the night club," complained a plump brunette, "Dragging us here at the point of a gun. And

I suppose you're a white slaver." Mr. Snartch received these revelations in dismay.

"Girls, please1" he said, "Let me "Nuts to your explanations! Let

us out of here!" The redhead rose and faced him

"But--" said Mr. Snartch. It was the wrong word. The redhead lowered ber head and

butted him. "Come on, girls!" yelled the blonde.

"We'll show this big builty!"

WHAT happened then was very painful. Six women went for Mr. Snartch in a big way-hut not the way be bad anticipated. They went So were the scowls on the faces of for him with bair-brushes and mirrors and pitchers and picture frames and

other loose articles. They went for him with their teeth and nails. They left Mr. Snartch lying on the floor with a Gideon Bible on his chest.

And he was almost ready for it. He recovered nearly an hour later.

The girls had left, taking the door from its binges en route.

Mr. Snartch had barely the strength to totter downstairs and buy fresh candles, frogs, and grape juice. He could scarcely manage to tear up some more roots and draw his chalk pentagon. His voice was hoarse as he chanted the Latin invocation.

But he made it And the demon appeared.

It squatted malignly hefore him, and

Mr. Snartch thought be detected a mocking gleam in his eyes. Gleam or no gleam, Snartch was too

angry to hesitate. "Now you've done it," be grated. "Those women - come clean now.

where did you get them?" "What's the matter?" asked the de-

"You know very well!" yelled Mr. Snartch, "Famous beauties of bistory -hah! You stole a hunch of chorus

girls from a night club, didn't you?" "Well-" "Damped right you did!" screamed Mr. Snartch, "Just a common kid-

naper, that's what you are," "But you asked for women-"

"Another thing," Snartch continued. ignoring the demon's words, "I've just figured out about that money, too, It's all here in this morning's paper. About the bank that was held up. No wonder the currency was marked. Hot (crept closer. "I kept my part of the money, that's what you gave me."

The demon hung his head. "Why?" grouned Mr. Snartch. "Why? That's all I want to know."

THE demon faced him, his skulllike features contorted.

"Because I'm old, that's why. Because I'm old, and out of practice. I

haven't got the stuff any more." "The stuff?" "The power, Everything passes with

age, you know." The demon sighed, heavily. Windows rattled

"I used to be omnipotent, almost. Like the book says. I could do anything, hring you anything, grant any wish. But now I'm all through,

"I did my best for you, though, I couldn't produce wealth for you as I used to, so I went out and stole it. And I couldn't evoke beautiful women for you, so I stole them. Thought you

wouldn't find out. But you did." "Yes, I did." Mr. Snartch was stern. "Of course, you realize this makes our agreement null and void."

The demon sat up. His claws scraped restlessly against the floor. His lips drew back in a bony grin. He hunched closer across

the flickering shadows. "Oh no," he droned. "Not at all."

"You mean?" "In three months you die. You give

me your soul." "Now listen here..."

"You listen to me," The demon bargain. I hrought you a million dollars, didn't I? I didn't say where it would come from or who it might belong to. You got your money.

(Still_) "Keep still!" The demon grinned wickedly. "You changed your mind, You wanted women. Blondes. hru-

nettes, redheads. I gave you blondes, brunettes, redheads. I didn't specify that they would like you. But I brought them. And so, Mr. Jeffrey Snartch, I am holding you to your bargain. In three months I will claim your soul."

Mr. Snartch drew himself erect. He shrugerd. "Very well, demon," he sighed.

"You asked for it, I suppose." "What?"

"I had hoped to spare you this final humiliation for a while," said Mr. Snartch, "Out of consideration for

your age." "What do you mean?" "You are very old, demon. Otherwise you wouldn't make such a mistake when you signed the contract

with me. You would have looked my name up first. But you didn't. You wanted my soul and tried to cheat me. Instead, I cheated you. You don't get my soul after all." "Why not?"

"Because," said Mr. Snartch, slowly, "I sold my soul to the Devil two years ago!"

The End

ARMY DEVELOPS NEW BUTTER NCE the American soldiers over seas like "Carter Spread."

Splenty of butter in their food and the num-ber of refrigerated ships that can be used to brine it to them are few, the Quartermaster Corps decided to do something about it. The result is a new type of butter developed by Lt. Col. Robert F. Carter of the Quartermaster Corps and is called

It is made by fortifying regular butter with hydrogenated cotton seed oil flakes so that the "butter" will stay solid and unspoiled in temperatures up to 110° F. The best thing about it is that it still taxtes like butter-which should win the boys' approval.

« « SCIENTIFIC ODDITIES » » By LYNN STANDISH

Science uncovers more of these "true" addities every day!

THOSE REMARKABLE "CAT'S EYES" HE "spooky" appearance of the black cat in most mystery thriflers is usually the direct result of his "luminous" eyes. Why

can we see these reflections in a cat? Scientists say that the luminous appearance of a cat's eyes in the dark is caused by the reflection of light by the specium incidum, a layer which lies between the retina and the outer covering of the pupils of the eyes. This remarkable membranous layer is a distinct differentiation from the choroid coat only in certain animals. It is this tapetum lucidum which is said to facilitate seeing when there is very little light. One explanation given is that this layer can reflect light mays through the retina a second time.

In your household cat, the tapetum lucidum is a brilliant green or blue in color and usually shines as a piece of metal. The well-known place is especially noticeable when artificial light is thrown on a cat in a dark corner, or when a cat in a dark place is observed through an opening, light entering the darkness through the opening being reflected from the cut's even as from a mirror. These objective observations will, no doubt, help you sit through your next horror thriller without a shudder!

INSANITY CURE

A CCORDING to Dr. Abraham Myerson of Boston, a mild electrical shot will jolt patients that have become depressed and inclined towards suicide back to normalcy. The contacts are made on the sides of the forchesd and then a current from 100 to 400 thousandths of an ampere is allowed to pass for less than a half-second. This treatment is very similar to a treatment for shell shock developed in Germany during World War L. but in the latter treatment the shock was administered by means of contacts held in the national's hand.

DINOSAUR REMAINS IN CAPITAL

WHEN workmen found a buge bone while making an excavation for the new filtration plant, they thought some Senator's dog was guilty of hoarding. But further examination showed it to be fossilized and Dr. Charles W. Gilmore, curator of vertebrate paleontology at the U.S. National Museum, has identified it as being the broken upper part of a huge saurian thigh bone. These dinosaurs belong to the sauroped group and lived over 150 million years ago. This is the third time dinosaur bones have been found in Washington which proves rather conclusively that

dinosaure once roamed over what is now our nation's capital. Dr. Gilmore estimated that the bone helonged

to a discour about ten feet high at the hips, and about sixty feet in overall length, and weighing ten tons. Workmen have been asked to keep a sharp look-out for any other fossils they might uncover.

AN "AUTOMAT" POR MONKEYS APES can do astonishing things. Some of their activities, as seen in zoos and circuses, have

impressed people with the remarkable similarity between these accomplishments and those of humans at play. In comparison with other animals, those in the monkey world seem to be the most intelligent, the most ranid learners. The age, as a result, has been called man's closest competitor. An amusing illustration of the ape's ability to learn is in the case of the "chimpomat." The "chimpomat" is a food-dispensing machine, with which chimpaneses have been taught to get familiar. The chimps readily learned to get food by inserting poker chips into the appropriate slots. to distinguish different sizes and colors, to use each thip in the appropriate opening, and, where necessary, to insert two chies.

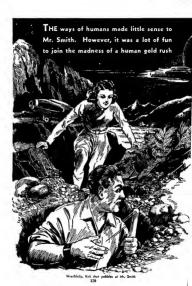
The scientist responsible for this experiment didn't state, however, if each chimponree carried his own tray of food or if each paid his own check. "Aw, monkeys aren't so smart after all!"

A HEAVY EATER

ONE of the beaviest eaters in the world is the large lubber grasshopper. This insect sometimes attains a length of three inches. The grasshoppers settle themselves down on anything green and commence to dispose of it in an orderly, but rather rapid, fashion. If a flock of these gluttons invades a beautiful carden on an early suring morning, it will be far from beautiful when night

While these insects are capable of inflicting terrible damage on crops and gardens, they are rather slow in cetting about. It is possible, therefore, to catch these "big fellows" and eliminate them if the proper equipment is on hand. If they were able to fly and move about rapidly they would. of course, he a much more serious threat to farmers.

Although these insects possess a rather gorgrously colored skin, they have a peculiar, disagreeable odor which usually even impels the otherwise beavy ester, the chicken, to pass them





GOLD RUSH on CALLISTO

By RUSSELL STORM

M. SMITH sang, "Ho for the life of a miner!"
His thin, reedy voice queaked like the door of a rocket ship

His thin, reedy voice squeaked like the door of a rocket ship swinging in the wind. It was not a melodious voice and the singing was not beautiful but Mr. Smith liked to hear himself sing and he assumed that everyone else liked to hear him sing too. He was sitting on a rocky ledge

jutting from the side of a hill on Callito, one of Jupiter's moons. Mr. Smith was a native of Callisto. This was his home world. He was happy here. Near where he was sitting there was a hole in the ground and down in the bottom of the hole, Toby Kirk, Mr. Smith's owner, master and god, was freefully pounding rocks. Toby Kirk was not hanov. He had come to Callisto to become a prospector and find his fortune. He had become a prospector but he had not found his fortune. To by had made only one discovery, that prospecting was hard work. Back-breaking, callous-forming, profamily-inspiring work. But to Mr. Smith, who had adopted Kirk upon the beautiful control of the control of the

"Ho for the life of a miner!"
"Shut up!" Toby Kirk snarled.
Mr. Smith lapsed into hurt silence.

"I was only singing," he muttered.

Tohy wiped perspiration from his face. "I sweat blood down here in this hole and you sit up there and gorge yourself on sugar, and sing," he said bitterly.

"Eating sugar and singing is a lot better than digging a hole in the ground!" Mr. Smith stoutly answered. As a matter of theory, Toby knew the velot was right. But as a matter of fact, he also knew that if he didn't dig a hole in the ground and strike pay dirt pretty soon, two of Callisto's residents would soon find themselves out of sugar and beans! No beans for Toby: no sugar for Mr. Smith. But he knew he could not explain their desperate plight to the velot. Scientists who had examined the little fur-covered natives of Callisto were never able to decide whether the velots were intelligent animals or dumb humans. The velots could talk, they aped human speech perfectly, they seemed to have quick, clever brains, but there their resemblance to humans stonged. Velots would not work. They were not intelligent enough to understand the relationship between work and food. Or maybe

they were too intelligent.

"Anyhow." Mr. Smith continued.

"I've heard you do some singing. Back in Dogskin Camp, I heard you stog, 'Glorious, oh glorious! There's four kegs of beer for the four of us.' You were singing that very song when the girl came looking for you."

"I only had a couple of beers," Toby muttered defensively.

"That wasn't what the girl said," Mr. Smith answered. "She said you were stewed."

"Well, I wasn't. Anyhow a man's got to have some relaxation." "You relaxed all right," the velot

"You relaxed all right," the velot of Joe's agreed. "Oh, I admit two of Joe's houncers relaxed before you did, but after the third bouncer tapped you with that bungstarter, you were relaxed for a couple of hours. What was that stuff you were drinking, boss, to make you think you could lick all the thugs in Dogskin Camp?"

"We were just having a little fun," Kirk answered. "One of the bouncers got smart and pushed me, and I pushed him back, and—"

"I saw it," Mr. Smith said. He paused and looked thoughtfully at his master. "What was the matter with the girl after that? You'd been getting along fine with her. Then you had what you called jm in that saloon. Then the big frost came. Was she mad because you got licked?"

M.R. SMITH had never heen able to understand the intricate relationships between human belings. And about girls, he especially did not understand. Neither did Kirk. The latter kicked victously at a loose pebble in the bottom of the hole. "She thought I was stewed" he said.

"And of course, you weren't!" Mr. Smith said, mock sympathy on his round, furry face. "You are just a poor, misunderstood hoy. Hey!" The velot ducked out of sight, but his reedy voice, tinged with profanity, came floating back. "Cut it out. You darned near hit me with that rock."

"I meant to hit you," Kirk answered. He picked up another pebble, sent it whizzing in the general direction of the profanity. "Darn you, Mr. Smith. I'll

teach you to sass me."
"Boss." the velot wailed. "Cut it

out "

There was a note of urgent pleafing in the volet's voice, but Kirk ignored it. "Spare the red and spoil the child" he muttered. He seen another rock the muttered is seen another rock to the child of the seen another rock and the seen another rock was all the seen another with the seen another was the seen and the seen another was to the disciplant to he was the way of he was into the disciplant was the way of the was in the disciplant with the seen and the was to the disciplant with the way of the way the

Zenith Jones was a girl. The girl, sofar a Kirl was concerned. The daughter of one of the first prospectors ever to land on Callitato, the had been born in a mining camp and from the time she was alshe to walk, she had followed ber fasher over the rough trails of the grim little word. The name Zenith and been bestowed on her by her fond parents, who thought she was about steents, who thought she was about the top of everything, an opinion shared hy every prospect on Callitios.

"Zenith!" he gasped, climbing out of the hole. "Miss Jones! Where'd you

come from?"

The last time he had seen her had been in Dogskin Camp, and the frost

had heen on.
"Zenith! Miss Jones—" He saw
Mr. Smith. "Why didn't you tell me
she was coming?" he demanded. As
look out, the velot should have reported
the presence of visitors.

"I tried to tell you she was coming,"
Mr. Smith explained. "You were too
busy throwing rocks to listen."

Down at the bottom of the slope, he saw her tank-truck, a vehicle with the tracks of a tank on the rear and the wheels of a truck on the front. Prospectors found these vehicles invaluable in traversing the rough country of Cal-

To his great surprise, he discovered that Zenith was smiling at him, actually smiling. When he had seen ber last, she had given him the impression that she would never even look at him again,

she had given him the impression that she would never even look at him again, let alone smile. "Watch that smile, boss," Mr. Smith warned. "When a woman smiles, there's

"You don't seem to trust me!" Her

tone implied that the velot had no honest grounds for his distrust.

Mr. Smith was unimpressed. "Poppycock," he said bluntly. "You can feed that stuff to the boss but not to

me."

She seemed to recognize the wisdom in what Mr. Smith said. She turned to the boss. "Toby," she asked breath-

leasly, "have you found anything?"
Toby! She was calling him by his
first name! "I found a surface outcrop
of quartz," he gulped, "and followed
the vein down for about twenty feet,
but it didn't show anything." He didn't
add that be had blistered both hands
and almost broken his back in the ef-

fort. Zenith was a first-class prospector. She could tell at a glance how hard he had worked. Maybe, when she saw how deeply he had dug, she would recognize he was worth something after all.

ZENITH swept the quartz vein and slope of the hill with an expert eye. "You should have gone down to the bottom of the hill," she explained. "The vein of quartz crosses the hill. You would have found the same vein cropping out at the hottom of the slope and you could have saved yourself all the trouble of digging a prospect hole."

Toby Kirk's knowledge of prospecting was almost nil. All he knew was that prospectors dug holes. If they found ore in the holes, good! If they found nothing, they dug somewhere else. His face began to turn red at the thought of Zenith discovering and call-

ing attention to his inexperience "He knew all the time he could do that," Mr. Smith suggested. "He dug the hole because he likes to dig."

"Shut up!" Kirk snapped. Zenith looked at Kirk's red face. She saw instantly she had made a mistake in pointing out his error in digging the

shaft. No man likes to have a girl show him she knows more than he does. "Toby, I think you dug a perfectly wonderful prospect hole," she said

quickly. "Aw," Tohy said,

"It's one of the hest holes I have even seen," the girl said firmly, "And you dug it all by yourself! That's

wonderful." "Do you really think so?" Kirk

asked. "I do indeed!" the girl said. Mr. Smith snorted in disgust but he

didn't say anything. "Toby." Zenith said, "I went into Dogskin Camp for supplies a couple of hours ago. The camp was almost deserted. Not ten people were left in it. You know what that means, don't

vou?" From the tone of her voice, he gathered that it was supposed to mean something important. Toby tried to think what it might mean. He thought of plague, a sudden raid by space pirates, but he couldn't think of any reason why the fierce little mining camp should be deserted. "The boys all get in a fight and knock each other off?" he suggested hopefully. From his own knowledge of the camp, this struck him as something that could happen.

"No!" Zenith snapped. "Oh. Toby. don't you know anything about this country at all? It means somebody has made a strike. There's a gold rush on. a stampede to a new gold field."

"The heck it does!" Toby gasped. He had never seen a gold rush but he had heard about them. Prospectors rushing madly across barren wastes. Mining camps were often deserted down to the last man at the news of a new gold field. The entire crews of space liners had been known to jump ship and join such stampedes. The gold rush to California, to the Klondike, were being reneated in the worlds of space. Toby felt excitement grip him as he realized what Zenith's story meant. He needed to make a strike of some kind. Maybe she would take him on this gold rush. Maybe this was why she had come to tell him the news, so he could go along! His heart leaped

at the thought. "Where is this new strike?" "In the Corner of Hell Mountains."

Zenith answered. "In the Little Corper, not the Big Corner. I talked to the owner of the bar where you-" She suddenly checked herself and stared icily at Toby. "He told me where it was. The news came in this morning and everybody cleared out. Two tank-trucks are leading the stampede but most of the miners are on foot: and even the tanks can't get there until late today. I thought that we-that We-"

INVOLUNTARILY she looked toward the top of the hill where a hattered, hut still serviceable space hoat rested. Tohy Kirk owned the little space flier.

"I get it," Mr. Smith spoke. "Now I know why she's so sweet and sticky. She thinks if you will give her a lift in your space boat, you can heat the stampede to the gold strike."

"I did not!" Zenith answered, blushing hotly. "I just wanted Tohy to have the tip." She glared at the velot.

Mr. Smith glared hack at her. On general principles, he objected to women. "Boss," he said, "which would you rather do-dig a hole here or dig a hole in the Corner of Hell Mountains?

You pay your money and you take your pick-" "We're going to the mountains," Toby said decisively. "Golly, Zenith,

how can I ever thank you?" "Did-did you say 'we'?" the girl said breathlessly. "Does-does that mean you're going to take me too? If-

if it does, that's the way you can thank me " "Of course I'm going to take you!" Tohy answered. "I'll help you get your

it and leave it here. Then we'll blast off." There was exultation in his heart. Zenith had hunted him up to tell him about the gold strike.

While the two humans were unloading the tank, Mr. Smith made certain that his own "supplies" were in good shape, said supplies consisting of a hag of sugar cubes around his neck. Opening the hag, he looked in it. A forlorn expression appeared on his face. Only a few cubes of sugar remained in the hag. The rest of the lumps were pehhles. Every time Mr. Smith removed a lump of sugar from the hag, he replaced it with a pebble, it heing his theory that if the hag seemed full of sugar, he would be happier. Mr. Smith had little interest in facts. Theories suited him well enough. If the theory

was obviously false, no matter, so long as it made him feel good. The velots were a strange race, but not as strange, Mr. Smith considered, watching the way his master was grinning at Zenith, as humans. Tohy was acting like a fool, Mr. Smith thought. But that didn't matter. If it made his master happy to have a woman around, Mr. Smith was willing to put up with her presence. He scurried up the hill after Tohy and Zenith.

"Get your hands up!" a harsh voice said. Mr. Smith, looking up, saw that four

men were standing in front of the lock of the space boat. Where they had come from he didn't know, unless they had sprung out of the ground, hut they were there, and from the size of the heat guns in their hands, they looked as if they meant husiness.

TOBY KIRK didn't know where they had come from either. He suddenly looked up and saw the heat guns pointed at him. He was too sursupplies out of your tank. We'll lock prised to be scared. Besides, he immedistely recognized two of the men. One of them, a miner named Mike, had sung a very fair baritone in the quartet he had organized in Joe's Bar, hack in Dogskin. Another was the bouncer who had used the bungstarter on him, a chap named Buckskin. They were not, Tohy figured, exactly his friends. But anyhow he knew them.

"What is this, a hold-up?" he snapped. "Naw," said Buckskin, rather uneas-

ily. "Nothing like that. Not if you're reasonable " "We thought-" the miner named

Mike hegan. "Put down those guns!" Zenith snapped. "The patrol will have you

fellows in iail if you try to hold us up." "Shut up!" Tohy hissed at her. "If you start talking about the patrol, they may shoot us just to hide any evidence against them. Besides, I know two of them."

"I might have guessed they would be friends of yours," the girl said bitterly. "They look like they belonged in saloons."

in saloons."

"What do you want?" Toby asked.

"It's this way." Buckskin explained.

"There's a stampede on. We won't get to the strike in time if we have to walk. So me thought—being as how you got a nice little space boat and will probably be going too—that we would just see if you wouldart give us a lift. Since you might not want to listen to us, we thought we had better get the drop on you first. But this ain't a hold-up, is it, men?"

His three companions shook their heads. "No. No, sir. Never. Not if you're reasonable, anybow." Toby looked at the men. He looked

at the guns. "Looks like we're going to have company," he observed. "Don't take them!" Zenith objected.

"They're only bluffing. They won't dare shoot."

"The heck they won't!" Mr. Smith walled. "Don't pay any attention to this woman, boss; she'll get us all killed." The velot was frantic with anxiety. Extremely peace-loving, he hated trouble of any kind. Especially he hated guns. "Take these buzzards with us, boss," he begged. "If we don't

take 'em, they'll shoot us sure."
Buckskin looked at Mr. Smith. "For a danged velot, that critter talks a lot of sense," he observed, shifting his chew of tobacco to the other side of his jaw.

"Gentlemen," Toby said, looking at the men, "It will be nice to have your company."

"Thanks, bub," said Buckskin. "You sure saved yourself a lot of trouble." Toby was annoved. The presence of these men would make impossible the love-making he had hoped to find time for. He blasted the ship into the air with a viciousness that rattled bis guests' bones.

CALLISTO, first discovered on earth by a man who was an astronomer and a scholar, was given a scholarly such that the men who went to the little would be men who went to the little would be cholain. They were a rough, tough breed. They had to be rough and tough to survive. A gold rush brought out the roughest and the toughest of them.

Toby saw part of the gold rush from the sir. As they neared the Corner of Hell Mountains, he saw miners loaded with camp equipment strung out for miles below them. The men on the ground saw the ship passing overhead, guessed its destination, and many a gloved fist was shaken at it. Once a heat gun thrust its twin beams toward them but they were too high for the

weapon to be dangerous.

"Tough bunch of buzzards," Toby

"They know we'll beat them to the strike and they don't like it," Zenith answered

"There's probably enough gold for everybody."

"There probably isn't," the gitl denied. "If the field is small, all the
worthwhile claims will be quickly taken
up." She paused and glanced surrepitticusly back at their guests in the main
cabin. "Toby," she whispered, "If we
take those men to the strike, we'll have
to compete with them for the choice
claims. It will be a dog-eard-dog fight
to see who can stake his claim quickest.
We may lose out."

"What can we do about it?" he questioned. "I can't just walk back to the main cabin and say, 'Sorry, boys, but this is where you get off'."

He shuddered at what would hap-

"I've been thinking," the girl continued. "I't know these mountains perfectly. I've been all over them. But Buckskin and his hunch of thugs don't know them. I've thought of a way to get rid of Buckskin and his men."

In a terse whisper, she outlined her plan, "We"l land at the first small mine we see. Bucksin and the others will think it is the strike. Since the first man on the ground gets first chance to stake a claim, they'll break their neck getting out of the ship. Before they discover we've landed at the wrong place, we'll take off again. They'll be left hehind!"

Toby stared in astonishment at her. "It won't work," he protested.

"It will work," she insisted. "Try it and see." "If I try it and it doesn't work, I

might just as well order my coffin," he pointed out. The girl's eyes hlazed. "Are you a

man or a sissle?"

There was only one answer to such a challenge. I'll try it," Toby dog-

a challenge. I'll try it," Toby doggedly said. "But it's against my better judgment."

Mr. Smith entered the control room.

The velot was in a bitter humor. He eyed the two humans. "Whispering, but?" be grunted. "That means you've probably heen thinking. When you humans start thinking, it's time to head for cover. Why oh why did I ever adopt you?"

ZENITH went back to the main cable where she took a seat near the window and watched the rocky surface roll beneath the ship. Suddenly she pointed through the window. "There's the strike, Toby! Land the ship."

Her words precipitated a rush to the windows. Down below them, in a long winding ravine, was a tiny hut. Near it, two men were digging a prospect hole. The dump of freshly-blasted rock was plainly visible.

"That doesn't look to me like the strike," Buckskin said. "That's notbing but a couple of fellers."

"The stampede basn't got here yet," the girl explained. "I know these mountains and this is the place. Land the ship, Toby," she shouted, swinging her pack to her back.

There was pandemonium in the cabin as the prospectors grabbed their packs, shovels, and picks. Zenth then moved to the lock, prepared to jump as soon as the ship landed. As a woman she was given the privilege of starting first. That was the only privilege she was granted. After she started first, she would either have to move faster than anyhody else or set run over.

Toby landed the ship. He was too busy in the control room to watch what was bappening but he beard the stampede start, the clank as the cabin door was kicked open, and the clatter of bob-nailed boots on steel plates as the miners raced from the ship, each intent on staking a claim and setting us location notices.

"Well, they're off," Mr. Smith said. There was a gloomy tone in the velot's voice. "I bet this doesn't work the way the girl figured it would." "Don't be a crape hanger," Toby said. He ran back to the main cabin.

Through the open door be caught a glimpse of miners rushing down the little slope toward the open mining pit. Then his view was blocked as Zenith appeared in the door. She had not taken part in the race but had merely stepped aside and let the others pass ber.

There was triumph on ber face. "I

told you it would work!" she said, gesturing toward the running miners. "Those thugs don't know these mountains like I do. They think they'll find the new gold strike down there, hut all they will really find will be a couple of fellows digging a prospect hole."

"By golly," Tohy said admiringly, "it did work. That was mighty smart

thinking, Zenith."

"Thank you," the girl answered.
"Blast off again and let's get back to
the Little Corner of Hell, where the
real strike is. Oh! What was that
noise?"

The noise was a creak coming from the door of the engine room located in the rear of the ship. The door swung open. Buckskin stood there. He had a gun in each hand.

"Well!" he said.
"Where did you come from?" Zenith

gulped. "I thought you went with the others." There was panic in her voice. "I saw you two whispering," Buckskin said. "And I figured you were up to some trick. I thought I would just wait around and see what it was, Hahl So you thought you would maroon us, did you? You thought you would men so with the work of the w

THERE was silence in the ship.
Zenith and Tohy were both staring
at the guns the thug was holding. They
that tried to trick Buckship and he had

caught them in the act.
"W-wh-what are you going to do?"
Zenith whispered.

"I ought to shoot you!" Buckskin snarled. "But I'm not. I'm going to give you another chance. Get the ship into the air and head for the real strike.

pronto!"
"Wh-what about your pals?" Tohy

The thug grinned. "They seemed to like it here," he said. "We'll just leave them to enjoy the scenery. But you." The guns centered on Tohy's wishbone. "Blast this ship away and he quick about it. And if you try another trick, it will he the last stunt you will ever try. Get movine."

Toby looked at Zenith. His mouth was working but he didn't say anything. Wiping the sweat from his forehead, he went forward to the control room. Mr. Smith was waiting for

him there.
"What did I tell you?" Mr. Smith

began.
"Shut up!" Toby snapped.

An hour later, under Zenith's guidance, they reached the range of mountains known as the Little Corner of Hell.

"If you should make a mistake in

guiding us," Buckskin said, "I feel sorry for what is going to happen to you."

"I won't make a mistake," the girl snapped. "I know these mountains perfectly. The gold strike is right under us. Keep on the lookout for a prospect hole. There it is!" she said, pointing to a small shaft with a pile of rock heside it.

A wide stretch of ragged hills lay helow them. The only sign of life was the prospect hole and a small tent pitched beside it.

"Well, we beat the stampede here," Buckskin said, surveying the scene helow them. "Set her down, huddy. We'll just get ourselves some claims

staked out."

"A-are you going to let us stake out
claims too?" Zenith asked.

"Why not?" Buckskin asked. "I can only stake out one claim. You're welcome to what's left. Of course," he befted the guns. "you understand

he hefted the guns, "you understa: I get first choice." Buckskin, now that they had reached the sceie of the strike, was in a good humor. Toby landed the ship. A few minutes later all three of them were busily engaged in staking claims. The prospect hole was located on a ledge of quartz. The owner of the mine and the tent pitched beside it was not present but his location notices were plainly visible, marking the

limits of his claim.

"He's probably gone to patrol headquarters to file notice of his claim," Zenith said. "We can locate on either side and be within our level rights."

The air of tension that had been present was gone now. An air of goodfellowship prevailed, a willingness to let by-gones be by-gones. Even Buckskin, after be had staked his claim, holstered his guns and expressed his anoreciation of the favors done him.

"Sure want to thank you for guiding me here, Mis Zenith," be said happily. "I never would have been able to find this place if it hach't been for you. And I want to thank you, Toby, for bringing me in your ship. I never would have got here in time if it hadn't been for you. Sure do appreciate it." "Think nothing of it." Toby airliy

said. He saw now that Buckskin want's such a bud guy. He grinned at the thug. There was a general feeling of peace and forgiveness. Mr. Smith was the only one who retained his air of gloom. The velot looked depressed. "When you humans start having a love-feast, it's time to start looking for cyclone cellars," he announced.

"Don't be a kill-joy," Toby told him. "Everything has worked out fine." But the velot refused to be convinced.

"HELLO, strangers!" a voice roared from the slope above them. Looking up, they saw a man coming

toward them. His clothes were ragged and torn and he looked as if he hadn't had a square meal in months.

"I'm the owner of these diggings," the man announced, coming up to them. "And I'm danged glad to have some company. Ain't seen a soul in three months. Heyl What's this for?" His eyes fell on the location notices they had set up around his claim.

"We haven't intruded on your claim," Zenith told him. "We are within our legal rights in setting up claims at the boundaries of the mine you have discovered."

The man stared at her. "Hell, lady, I ain't disputin' that!" he burst out. "As far as I'm concerned, you can stake claims any place you dang please. But what I want to know is—why did you stake 'cm here!"

"Because this is where the strike is,"
Zenith told him. "This is the Little
Corner of Hell and there's a gold strike
here and worker mede it."

here and you've made it."

The man stared at her as if he did

fill a hollow tooth!"

not believe his ears. "The Little Corner of Hell," he said, pointing in the direction from which they had come, "is a bundred miles over in that direction. This, lady, is the Big Corner of Hell. And as for there being a strike here, hell, lady, I've been working this hole for the past three months, and I knewn't stake, mough gold out of it to

The words rang in Toby Kirk's ears like strokes of doom. He instantly realized what had happened. Zenith had made a mistake. The place where they had first landed, where they had thought they were marconing the three miners, was where the real strike was located. This mine was only a worth-

less prospect hole.

Zenith, in spite of her supposed perfect knowledge of the mountains of Callisto, had taken them to the wrong

place. Toby stared at ber, his mouth working. He started to snarl and changed his mind. She looked as if she was going to cry at any minute. And a voice roating behind him reminded him of a momentarily-forgot-

ten source of danger.
"Double-crossed!" Buckskin was

shouting. "I've heen tricked. I been guided to the wrong place!"

Toby whirled. Buckskin was drawing his guns. A dozen desperate plans flashed through Toby's mind. He might try to jump the thug, but he knew that before he could move Buckskin would put a heat beam through him. Sweat popped out on his body.

"I'll fix you for this!" Buckskin grated. "Both of you. Then I'll take your ship and guide myself where I want to go. You can't double-cross me and get away with it." No amount of explanation. Toby

knew, would convince the thug he had been the victim of an honest mistake. Buckskin lined up the sights of his guns. There was nothing Tohy could do. He tensed his muscles to leap desperately at the thug, then caught him-

self in the nick of time.

"Drop those guns!" a voice bad

squeaked.

It was a voice that Toby recognized.
He sought the source from which it came. And saw Mr. Smith standing directly behind Buckskin. Mr.

Smith's teeth were bared in a ferocious snarl.

His courage was amazing. He was facing sudden death in an effort to bein

his master.
"Drop those guns or I'll bite you!"
the yelot someaked.

Startled, Buckskin looked around. He saw the velot. It was the last thing be saw in a long time. Toby's fist rammed home under his ear. Buckskin turned a complete flip in the air.

When be hit the ground, he didn't

f "Holy Pete, boss!" Mr. Smith gulped. "When you hit 'em, they really stay hit!"

"You're the one who made it possible," Toby said. "If you hadn't had

sihle," Toby said. "If you hadn't had the courage—" "Courage!" Mr. Smith squeaked.

"What are you talking about? I'll be a And don't stand there telling me what a great guy I am. Get back in the sbip and burn the wind back to the real strike. Mayhe we can get there quick enough to make up for the mistake—"

THEY "burned the wind" back to the place where they had dropped the miners. If only they could get here in time! From the air they saw the answer to their question. The racause of their desity, the sampede had reached the gold strike ahead of them. Every available foot of ground had already been staked. Toby landed the strike. The whole bill was covered with miners. Silently they went back to the ship.

"The gold is there all right," Zenith said. "But it's a small vein and every inch of ground bas been staked. We're left out in the cold. And it's all my fault."

She looked so miserable that Tohy

felt sorry for ber. "Forget it, kid," he said gruffly. "You did the best you could. It wasn't your fault that we failed."

"But it was my fault," she insisted.
"If I hadn't been so darned smart, we would have got here in time. But I thought I knew these mountains like a book—and—and—"

She no longer looked like an extremely efficient young woman. She looked like a little girl who was alone in the world, a little girl who needed

to be protected. "Listen, Zenith," Toby said, "Look, kid, there's lots more gold in this

world. We can find it. If we don't find it on Callisto, we'll find it on Io or Ganymede, or we'll try the asteriod belt. I mean, we missed once, but we

won't miss all the time." "'We,' " she queried tremulously.

"Did you say 'we'?" "I sure did," Toby answered. "Me and you. Us. We."

He had missed his chance for the gold but he had found something a darned sight more valuable. Zenith. His spirits soared to the sky, "Zenith,"

he whispered, "Zenith, darling-" Mr. Smith saw what was happening. He was greatly impressed. The velot loved peace, He loved happiness, Guns and fighting made him ill. But now his lord and master was happy. This made him happy, too. Happiness meant singing and eating sugar. He

sang better with his eyes closed. Mr. Smith closed his eyes. "Ho for the life of a miner!" he

Not many hours earlier. Toby had been annoved by that voice. But now he liked it. "Listen to the little rascal sing," he whispered. "Listen to him." THEN he forgot about Mr. Smith

as Zenith cuddled up close to him. He was suddenly reminded of the velot's presence. Mr. Smith quit singing and started swearing.

"Darn the darned thing to hell anyhow!" Mr. Smith raged.

"Hey, cut out that swearing," Toby vigorously ordered. "What's wrong with you anyhow?"

"I broke a tooth," Mr. Smith snarled. "I reached into my sugar hag for a lump of sugar but I had my eves

closed and I got a pebble instead. I clamped down on it and broke a tooth. Darn the thing anyhow!" the velot

raged, flinging the pebble across the "That's what you get," Toby said,

"for feeding your face with your eyes shut." Zenith looked at the pebble. She

suddenly got off Toby's lap. She ran across the room, picked up the pebble,

stared at it, then turned to Mr. Smith. "Where did you get this?" she demanded.

"What's it to you?" Mr. Smith snapped. "I broke a tooth on the darned thing,"

"Answer me!" She stamped the floor. "Where did you get this?"

"Back where the boss was digging that hole in the hill," Mr. Smith answered. "Back where you first found

us. Why?" "Because it's almost solid gold!" the girl screamed. "Because it must have come from one of the richest gold

mines ever found. That's why." She was frantic with excitement. Toby grabbed the pebble and examined it. "Golly!" he gasped, "There is a layer of these pebbles about two feet

thick back where I was digging. I dug right through it. I saw the stuff but it didn't shine like gold and I didn't think-" "I told you," Mr. Smith interrupted,

"that the way to find a gold mine is not to think. That's what's wrong with you humans-vou're always trying to think without having the equipment for it1"

THUS ends the true story of one of the richest gold mines ever found on Callisto. Toby had dug right through a layer of rock rotten with gold. Being an amateur prospector, he had thought that gold not only was always found in quartz but always shines. The truth is, gold ore never

shines.

The mine was registered in three names: Toby Kirk, Zenith Jones, and Mr. Smith. It is known as the Mr. Smith mine. Mr. Smith has sugar to burn these days. He sits any place he without any discernible musical talent.

pleases and sings as much as he wants to.

In the absence of any form of musical instrument on Callisto, Mr. Smith provided the music when Toby and Zenith were married, singing, "Here Comes the Bride," with great gusto, if

VIGNETTES OF FAMOUS SCIENTISTS

By ALEXANDER BLADE

Guyot

He was the nineteenth contury's leading geographer and gegiggist, his best known work being an glacial mation.

RNOLD GUYOT, the Swiss-American A geographer and geologist, was born at Boudevilliers, near Neuchâtel, Switzerland, on September 28, 1807. Before coming to the United States in 1848, he studied at the college of Neuchâtel and the University of Berlin, where he began a lifelone friendship with Louis Agassia. From 1835 to 1839 he was a private tutor in Paris, and from 1839 to 1848 professor of history and physical geography in the College of Neuchâtel. He then went to America and settled at Cambridge. Massachusetts in 1848. In the same year he gave a series of lectures at the Lowell Institute, Boston. From 1848 to 1854 he was in the service of the Massachusetts State Board of Education as a lecturer, and from 1855 until his death was professor of physical geography and peology at Princeton University. He also held a lectureship in Princeton Theological Seminary

1884. As early as 1838 Guyot undertook, at Agassiz's suggestion, the study of slaciers, from which he announced for the first time certain important observations relating to glacial motion and structure. Among other things he noted the more rapid flow of the top than of the bottom of glaciers and described and gave the correct explanation of the laminated or "ribboned" structure of these rivers of ite, and ascribed the movement of glaciers to a gradual molecular displacement rather than to a sliding of the ice mass. He submitted a paper on his scientific investigation of the glacial age to the Geological Society of France, the first accounting of this phenomena ever to be riven. This work was carried on by Agassiz and Forbes, and later by Tyndall. At the

from 1861 to 1866. Guyot died February 8,

present time, almost entirely as the result of the studies of these four men, the work performed by ice in erosion, and by the Ice Age in the history of animal and vegetable life, has become fairly well understood.

Guyot was ranked high as a goologist and meteorologist and the system of meteorological observation which has made the United States Weather Bureau such an efficient organization is very largely due to him. The Wenther Bureau established from his system of observation is the model upon which practically those of all the other nations of the world have been huilt. He also made extensive barometrical surveys of the Appalachian mountain chain, and prepared metenrological and physical tables of the eastern coastal plain of the country, which have been used ever since. Guyot explained the following

phenomena: In the footlights of a high mountain range, the snowfall of a winter ordinarily disappears completely during the following summer; but in the higher parts, where the precipitation has been greater and the summer heat less, there is often a stendy accumulation. If this process went on indefinitely, it is evident that in due time the entire upper parts of ranges and high plateaus would be buried under sheets of ice for. as snow accumulates in depth it packs under the increasing weight, and changes gradually into Ice. And this is actually what has beenened in the interior of Greenland and other broad areas in the polar regions, where the slope of the surface is gentle Usually, however, a form of relief is provided

As the mass and weight increases, the ice begins to move downkill in all possible directions, carrying with it, and imbedded firmly in its under note the gravel, and and boulders of their slopes and on its surface such of the same materials as fall down upon it from higher parts. Thus the frozen atream becomes a gigantic rasp, or a section of very coarse sandpaper, each year cutting deeper and deeper into the bottom and

sides of the perge in which it floors. When the river of ice marks lower shitteds where summer temperatures prevail over those of widers, the ice muchs, depositing the surface load of defries it has brought down from above, thus froming what are called lateral moralise, that is lore flare of gravel and such healtest on each side of the putty while at the out souther mus of the other parts of the putty while at the out souther mus of the surface load in parts, while it is advanting, that is, pushing its way out through the threat of a valley or ravelle miles lower all-in the threat of a valley or ravelle miles lower all-in-

tudes where the alope of the surface is less, the former continuous to grow in length and height, and no terminal movathe appears. But when, as the result of the amelioration of general climatic conditions, the glacker begins to retreat, the latters commences to form, steadily increasing in many height and width, until a wall or dam is built up across the valley, and a lack bash, or speak

or them come into existence.

Guyot also did much study of geography in America through the preparation of series of text-books and wall maps, for which he obtained a mutial of progress at the Vienne Erbiblion of 1873. He contributed to the American Erbiblion of Science, the reports of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Smith-rowing Institution, published many books and

alti- periodicals.

The man who dreamed up a steam engine out of a teakettie!

JAMES WATT, who is often credited with the investion of the modern condensing but the control of the modern condensing lateral properties of the control of the control state, on James 19, 1786. Although the principles underlying the steam-engine's construction and even before his high regime of a new were in operation in Comwall, neverbaless the world in individe to his greams and instanty for vital improvements in their construction, without which is a producer of power. In we manufact to much as a producer of power have an amount of the control of the co

His only education was at the town schools which he was unable to attend regularly on account of had health. At this time he was long the count of had health. At this time he was long to the count of health and health a

apprenticeship, and Watt was forbidden to open a shop.

However the university employed him as an instrument maker, and Watt remained there until 1760, when he stablished himself independently,

working also at times as a civil enginer.
As early as 1599 Watt turned his attention to
the construction of a steam carriage and in 1764
he was called upon to repair the model of the
Newsomen engine in the cabinot of the undersity. Studying the machine thoroughly, he seen
realized its defects and lack of efficiency. His
first improvement was to arrange for the condensation of the steam outside of the cylinder,

and in a chamber where a vacuum could be minimized. This was followed in turn by the introduction of the steam on both idea of the piston, which presented the syndems to be placed in a helimetal position if desired; the use of the symbol to convert expresenting into restary motion. Confronted with a patent on the connecting of or crash, that had been greated to a former captiopse, Watt invested what become known with a symbol control of the confronted with a symbol control of the control of the well as a maletim of the control of the well as a maletim of the control of the well as a maletim of the control of the well as a maletim of the control of the con-

The application of the centrifueal powerner to the steam engine, the invention of the water swore, the mercury steam saure, and the indicator are but a few of the many improvements Watt contributed to the steam engine. The invention of the steam hammer naturally resulted from his work on the steam engine, but the copying press, a spiral oar or screw propeller, the discovery of the composition of water, a machine for reproducing sculpture, and numerous physical instruments and methods show the diversity of his researches and the breadth of his talents. So great was the confidence inspired by his mechanical incompty that he had no different in securing the capital required to embark extensively in the manufacture of engines; and when he retired in 1800, he was able to turn over

a remunerative business to his two som.

In 1994, he was dected a member of the Royal Society of Edinburch, and in the following year of the Royal Society of Edinburch, and in the following year of the Royal Society of London. In 1806 the degree of LL.D. was conferred on him by the University of Glangow, and two years late the was made a foreign associate member of the French Institute. He side at Heathfuld, in Scaffordhue, on August 25, 1819. A national memorals in his bonor was placed in Westungher Asbey.

Ьv LEE FRANCIS

For two thousand years no woman had lived on Earth. Then Jerry Rand found a Time capsule-and material for an experiment!

EFARR can blow bis blasted brains out," Jerry Rand The approaching dreadnaught was shouted above the steady roar of rocket exhaust, "That's the last

space capsule. Its mystery will be solved in the next balf bour or we'll be floating in space with our ship knocked out from under us."

He jammed all rocket release levers down hard and felt snace ship X10 pound forward into the blackness of the moon pit, Cassini. Behind Rand. "Rad" Wallace, pudgy, grim-faced dual man held tightly to his controls. "Rad" Wallace's lips were moving, but not in prayer.

clearly visible in the long range telaglass now. It came hurtling down the dark side of the pit, not five hundred miles behind the X10. Rand's ship was within diving distance of the space capsule. The capsule hung in the dark void heneath them like a slim metal pencil, leading them onward.

"LeFarr's got the atomic cannon rained on us." Rad Wallace said calmly. "He'll have our range soon, and then blotto for the X10."

Jerry Rand twisted in his seat, ap-



speed.

praising eyes fixed on the tela-glass. "We've got time to swing out the space net, scoop up the capsule and swing out of his range." His mouth set in savage white lines. "I'll give LeFarr a taste of his own medicine before we

get out of this mess."

Rad Wallace leaped from his place at the controls and shouted down the corridor toward the main hatch. The X10 shuddered as the space net shaped like a hollowed, perforated sail fluttered out from the side of the speedy X10 and straightened in the wind. LeFarr was almost within range now, his great fighting ship whistling down toward the small X10 with terrific

"We better get out of here before we get blown wide open," Wallace shouted.

"That guy means business." Jerry Rand watched the image of the pursuing dreadnaught grow large against the screen. His hands were steady on the controls. The X10 went into a twisting, howling spin and the ship lurched slightly as the space capsule hit the net and sank into its grasping folds. Rand straightened the ship out quickly. With a sigh of relief he saw that the capsule was safe and the crew already busy with the job of dragging the net in. He turned his full attention to LeFarr and the onrushing dreadnaught. "We got it all right," Rad Wallace

said. "Better dodge LeFarr if you can. We aren't strong enough to fight him." Rand's face lighted in a slow grin.

His hand came back slowly on the controls and the X10 turned about hard and climbed steadily toward the blue lip of the pit. Up-up the wall they twisted and climbed, and in the telaglass LeFarr's dreadnaught was a huge black blot. They were under the belly of the hig fighter.

"Give him a dose of fire," Rand or-

dered coolly. "It may teach him to keep his hig blunderbus out of our territory." Wallace leaned toward the controls

of the small, rapid firing atomic guns. With a quick ferk, he sent five roaring shots of flame directly into the helly of the dreadnaught. Five separate mushrooms of red flame broke outward from the dark ship, lighting the velvety black pit.

"That'll keep them busy for a while," Wallace said grimly. "It'll take a few hours to get that fire under control." Rand nodded. Through the rear

sights he watched LeFarr's ship falter and come about. Men were dashing wildly out of the hatches, ready to fight the blaze. The X10 cleared the lip of Cassini and went diving into space toward earth.

"Take over," Rand commanded. "I'm going to find out if this capsule is another false alarm."

RAD WALLACE had never been prouder of his youthful chief. Ierry Rand was all that the tough old warrior was not. Rand, in Rad Wallace's opinion was the tallest, hardest fighting youngster in the Earth patrol. The boy had trained hard to come into the service with a clear head and the finest physique Wallace had ever looked upon. As they went aft together, the fat, lopsided old fighter had to puff and grunt to keep stride with

the long-legged Rand. This was their last chance, and if it

failed, their last trip in each other's company. Four times they had fought and blasted their way into and out of every space trap in the universe. Four times they had found nothing. This, the last trip, would have to be success-

"Five capsules," the manuscript had said, "have been shot into space. Because pirates will search for them, only one has been loaded. The odds are against its being found. In that capsule lies the future happiness of man. A fortune more precious than all else."

A forsime more precious than all esse."
When they reached the forward cabin, Slingo, the pin-headed Martian deck hand had already drawn in the space net, and the capsule was on the floor at his feet. It was barely six feet in length and made of shining metal.

Slingo jumped up and down in his excitement. "I t'ink you got someting here, my Captain."

here, my Captain."

Under Rand's supervision, Slingo turned the screw can loose and it rolled

across the floor,

"He's cold I i ke everything, Captain," Slingo protested, "And heavy

too."

His eyes were shining with anticipation. Rand pushed him away gently and sank to his knees. Something in the capsule was hard and brittle against

his fingers.
"Ice!" Rand's voice was bitter with
disappointment. "Some fool has

disappointment. "Some fool has pawned ice upon us as a great treasure."

An oath escaped Wallace's thick lips. He dropped heavily to the floor

at Rand's side. Rand started to pull the ice stick from the capsule and his breath caught suddenly in a horrified gasp. "Good God," Wallace whispered,"

"Good God," Wallace whispered,"

A man!"

"But such a man I have never see."

Slingo protested. "It has long hair, my Captain, and a very weak face." It was true. Jerry Rand had never seen a human creature like this. Its face was delicately modded with high cheek bones and flawless white skin.

face was delicately molded with high check bones and flawless white skin. It was clad in a short, pale green garment. The creature was long and slim with small hands and legs that had never been made to carry it for any dis-

tance. Oddest of all were the twin mounds of flesh that appeared on either side of its deformed chest. They stood taut and uniform under the straining cloth.

CAREFULLY Rand dragged the ice block across the room and lifted it to the couch. His hands were dripping from the melting ice. The crew stood at a respectable distance, gazing with wonder at the strange thing they had discovered.

"Frozen in ice," Rand said slowly.
"It is like nothing I have ever seen."
"This must have been a strange world five thousand years ago," Wallace offered almost grimly. "to let such

weaklings rise to power."

Water dripped away from the melting sheath and collected on the floor beneath the couch. There was only a thin casing of ice on the body now. Still they waited, not knowing what to 6. Finally the last of the ice shell

had melted. Color flowed into the face of the strange creature. The limbs turned a glowing pink and the queerly deformed chest started to rise and fall gently. The creature's heart was beating.

Lips that turned red, parted slightly and soft blue eyes opened wide. They stared as though fixed on the wall. Rad Wallace walked to the couch and pushed a searching finger curiously against the rounded chest.

"This is a oueer man." he sald soft-

ly. "His chest is soft and warm to the touch."

The contact was almost pleasant. He was about to repeat it when the figure on the couch sat upright suddenly, leaning on one slim elbow. There was no mistaking the utter horror in its wide eyes.

"Doctor Ames? Where is he?"
Wide eyes swept the room, search-

ing every face for some recognition.

Then awareness of the tiny fighting cabin, the roughly clothed men seemed to penetrate the stranger's mind.

"Please! Someone call Doctor

Ames. This isn't the hospital. Where

Jerry Rand, standing there stiff and tall among his crew, realized for the first time how really precious his discovery was. Doctor Ames was the man who, five thousand years ago, had prepared the manuscript Rand held in his possession. The great Doctor Ames whom history had long listed as the outstanding man of his age, had duned this creature in some manner. The stranger on the couch wasn't aware of the immense length of time that had elapsed since it first had slept. Suddenly a wave of pity swept over the young captain of the X10. This stranger had awakened to a new, strange world. The very basics of life had changed since that long gone day this oddly-formed creature had entered the capsule. For five thousand years man had been created in test tubes. No

woman had lived on Earth in all that time.

Jerry Rand was fully convinced that the space capsule, said to contain man's greatest treasure, had restored to the world something long forgotten. Here, breathing normally, and in full possession of her senses, was Earth's only normal.

R AND went toward her and in two strides reached her side. The girl same upright, her body taut and deiant. Rand went down on one knee. "Please do not misunderstand." he

"Please do not misunderstand," he hegged. "We know nothing of you. My men are only curious to find what matter of human being they have discovered."

She sat very still, alert and waiting

for him to go on. Rand marvelled at the smooth skin of her body. The way it seemed to radiate heat.

"I went to the hospital last night, and Doctor Ames was to remove my tonsils." Her voice was low with anger. "What do you expect me to do when I awaken in—in this den of yours?

I awaken in—in this den of yours? You'd better send this moh of thick skinned hums out of here before I tear out a few eyes."
"You've heen away from the hospital

for considerably more than a night," he said softly. "You must understand that we mean you no harm. Destiny has played a queer game with you." The girl's blue eyes blazed as she

The girl's blue eyes blazed as she sprang to her feet. The filmsy cloth that only partly covered her slim, dainty figure, seemed to retreat as she drew it closely about her.

"Don't get me wrong," she hlazed.
"I don't know how I got here and I don't give a care. I'm a lady and you'd better get me out of this stag party before I start screaming."
Rand backed away from her, wary

at the sudden outbreak. Her words puzzled him and he feared she might attack in some strange manner. "Stag? Party?"

"Wait a minute, fella." Her breasts rose and fell with anger, and she sank backward on the couch once more, her arms crossed to cover the smooth mounds of flesh. "This act doesn't register with me. Take me home before I pull a figer act on that handsome face of yours. I go to sleep expecting to wake up with a sore throat and

now I get myself into the kidnap racket. It doesn't scare me a bit."

Rand knew that in some manner he must make her understand what had happened. It was onlyous that the ancient Doctor Ames had told his patient nothing of what was to happen to her. She had been led to believe that her sleep would last a few hours. It had lasted centuries. Perhaps by ancient standards of beauty the child considered berself attractive. To Rand she seemed small and very much outmoded in his world of men. Earth scientists would want to question her and explore the manner in which she had been molded. He must be careful that no harm came to the girl.

"I'm sincere," he said. "I am your friend Please believe me."

With a defiant toss of her head she sent long black curls flying over ber shoulders. Shrugging, she placed a small hand on his brown arm.

"The big bad wolf won't hurt you, darling," she said. "Just go and see his itchings. No you don't, Santa Claus! I'm sitting right here until you promise to get me home, and I can

swing a mean right if you get funny." Rand was careful to stay where she could make no sudden attack upon him.

"I think," he said solemnly, "that some explanation is necessary."

"And I think you'd better get me out of this house of horrors and let me catch the next train for home. My dad's a cop and when he finds out what you've done! Oh boy!"

HE made no attempt to understand ber strange largon. He bad to tell her what had happened and be knew she would suffer a terrible mental shock. Would she understand that by a simple experiment, she had been preserved through time until now she was but a museum piece-a creature to be studied coldly under the light of research?

"You must listen to me," Rand said suddenly, "After I've finished. . . ."

"You'll take me home?" She was eager, and perhaps a little frightened now.

"My name is Ierry Rand," he told

her. "And I'm Sheila Laughlin, daughter

of a Chicago policeman and belonging to one of the best Irish families to see God's green earth. Now, that we've

been introduced formally, let's talk turkey." "Three years ago," Rand started, "I was sent into space in search of a

strange treasure."

At the mention of space, Sheila Laughlin made an odd, dry sound in her throat and went suddenly pale. She nodded for him to go on.

"I had discovered an old manuscript in the vault of an ancient bospital. The man who wrote it, foresaw the disease

that would drive all women from the earth." He watched Sheila Laughlin's face

closely and was surprised that her eyes never wavered from his. "This man was named Doctor

Ames. He prepared five space capsules. Four were empty but into the fifth he placed a girl and froze her body in time-ice. When the plague struck he planned to duplicate this feat many times. He was too late. By the end of his life, no woman remained alive on earth."

"Now tell me one about Buck Rogers," Sheila snapped. "He's my style." Yet, she was interested now. She

knew that there had been a Doctor Ames at city hospital. It all sounded possible. "Buck Rogers?" He looked at her

questioningly. Sheila drew her knees up under her chin and clasped her fingers about

them. She was very still watching Rand through balf-closed lids. "Go on," she begged softly. "I

guess I'm in for it." "There is little more to tell. I have

found the girl that Doctor Ames placed in the capsule. From now on she is the property of the High Council of

Earth." The girl's forehead was wrinkled with bewilderment. She stood up and went falteringly toward the row of quartz windows in the side of the cahin. Stopping at the nearest, she hesitated, her face pale, and looked out, Nothing hut void was outside that window. Far ahead, rushing up to them, was the small, whirling globe of Earth. Away in all directions, the

planets and smaller bodies of the uni-

verse followed their carefully plotted

courses. For a long time she stood there, and when she left the window her face showed acceptance of the blow that had struck her. There was no doubting now. No turning back. Her life had been stretched by time into a world of which she knew nothing. A world that was barsh and cruel and helonged to men. There was no place here for her. There was no place in time for her. She was one frail, frightened woman facing a world of men,

CHE went straight to the tall young man who bad been kind to her. She believed him now, and had trust in him. In his hands her future safety lay. She put a faltering hand on his arm and looked into his eyes.

"What year is this?" she asked ab-

ruptly. "Five thousand years have passed since you were frozen and your heart

stopped heating," he answered. "The year now is 6942. She stood up slowly, hot blood rush-

ing to her face.

alone.

"Then I was the-the rabbit in the hat," she said. "Out of fifty million femmes, it had to be this girl who was

put on ice for five thousand years." The last words came from ber lips

reluctantly, as though the very sound of them left her stunned. Tears

formed in her eves. "The boys will be biting their nails

to see me, I suppose?" she said weakly. Rand, coming from a race of men

who knew nothing of woman's emotions, found himself strangely moved hy her reaction.

"I know not the meaning of 'biting their nails," be admitted. "There will, of course, be certain repercussions."

Sheila Laughlin didn't smile. Her face was a mask of slowly dawning understanding.

"Yeah!" she murmured softly, "I should think there would be 'certain repercussions,1 32

And then she slipped toward the floor. As his arms went around her, she felt a strange feeling of relaxation. This, she decided, was enough to make any decent girl faint.

ERRY RAND had been commissioned by the High Council to fly the space-ways in search of treasure. His finding of Sheila Laughlin had been a startling discovery. However, the discovery wasn't the type of information that should be made public until the High Council approved. Several hours out of East Station he called the crew together for a final meeting before they landed. Rad Wallace raised a thick arm for silence and Rand addressed his men.

"You have all witnessed the finding of a woman. You have been told of this discovery and its importance. No one can guess the effect her presence will have on earth. We haven't the authority to make her finding known until the High Council gives us a decision. No doubt they will consider her a rare example of life in the past and her history will fill a wide gap in our libraries. Until that time, I hold each of you responsible for her safety and ask that you forget that she is with us. I believe I can trust you all."

When the crew had returned to their tasks of landing the X10, Rand stood, alone and badly puzzled, in the forward cabin. There was, he knew, nothing different or sub-normal about men of his race. They had been developed and incubated in test tubes. They emerged to grow as healthy, thoughtful men of normal size. Men able to think and act perfectly

He pondered over old history book facts, about men and women who had been different. Rand grinned a little and wondered if Sheila's coming to earth would be greeted with sly chuckles at her physical weakness. He wondered if men would place her apart as an example of the days when other men, too weak to stand by themselves. leaned against women to support cer-

tain weaknesses within themselves. There lurked in Rand's mind the terrible thought that he might be forced to yield to her attractions. He had turned the word "she" over in his mind many times in the last few hours. It was dangerously pleasant on his tongue.

Rand didn't find the slim figure, red lips and softly rounded body discusting to his eyes. Yet, there was still that strong feeling of disinterest toward her, hred from a life without her kind. A disinterest that made him angry at his weaker thoughts.

"Am I disturbing Super-man?" Startled by the sudden voice from

behind him, Rand twisted around. Sheila Laughlin leaned in the open door, her lightly clad body poised gracefully. A smile parted her moist

lips and the teeth behind them were even and pearly white. "I-I did not hear," he stammered.

"I hope you are comfortable?"

She had succeeded in smoothing the wrinkles from her short skirt and the dark hair was combed out fine and shining on smooth shoulders. Rand wondered at the delicate flesh of her body. He had never seen anything like this in his world of hrawny men.

"I'm a darn long way from being comfortable," she protested, "How would you feel if you were dropped into

a world of women?" Though the question was vague to

him, he was aware of what she implied.

IN Sheila Laughlin's mind there was a plan. It was rather vague and she knew she faced tremendous odds. In the short time she had been aboard the X10, Sheila realized this man. Rand, was the only one she could cling to for safety.

The men about her stared as though she were some rare museum piece. An odd animal to be studied coolly and dissected either by the eye or knife for research purposes. Rand's mention of the High Council and its ownership of her had disturbed Sheila more and more during those few hours since she had awakened on the couch with Rand staring down at her. She realized that the High Council, made up of men who had never seen or dreamed of a woman, would be heartless in its use of her

If she could manage to awaken some interest in Rand, perhaps he would protect her. Otherwise, her fate would be the fate of a strange hutterfly caught in the net of some long-bearded scientist.

She watched Rand closely, wondering what effect she would have on him. Wondering if in his heart there lay buried some long lost attraction to the feminine sex. As much as she hated to throw herself at him. Sheila knew she must do so.

For the first time in his life, Jerry Rand blushed.

"We will dock at East Station shortly," he said. "You will remain on the X10 until arrangements are made."

Sheila's face clouded. "I understand I'm to be a sort of prisoner of war until the High Council decides whether I'll look better pressed between book ends or stuffed." Jerry was uncomfortable.

"I'm sorry you feel that way," he said stiffly. "Men of our time know little of women. I do not want them to laugh at you."

"They won't laugh," she said coolly and he saw fury in her eyes again. "P#

see to that 3

"Please!" More and more he was aware of the strange warmth that her presence made inside his body. The comfortable feeling of her nearness. "There are certain differences about your life-your body. Our men of science will want to study you." Sheila was still angry.

"I don't let any old billy goats paw me over," she said, "I'll answer anything they ask me if they keep the party clean. After that, hands off. I'm Mama's girl." Rand didn't understand her. All he

knew was that her eyes were twinkling. He smiled back, hoping she wouldn't act that way again. "How about you, Jerry?" she asked

suddenly. "Did you come from a test tube?"

He nodded "How else?"

She walked to his side, her hips swinging gracefully, hair floating behind her smooth neck.

"It-it sounds impossible. Haven't you ever been kissed?"

R AND tried to back away and felt the wall behind him. She stood close now, one of her hands resting on

his shoulder.

"I have read that in the past, certain liberties were taken between sexes," he said faintly. "Of course to us, these things are but foolish fancies of an an-

cient life." Oddly enough, he didn't even believe his own words. He wished that he

could call for Rad Wallace, and then felt foolish to have given the idea a thought. She stood near him, a broad grin on her saucy face. "Perhaps," she said, "it's the five

thousand years I've spent in the ice box -and perhaps it's just that you're a darn nice looking boy. Jerry, I think

Pll kiss von." Her arms crept around his neck and

her fingers traced little lines on his cheek. He stood stiff and terrified. Then her warmth aroused things within him that had been long dormant. His arms swept around her waist and pressed the breath from her. Her lips. parted slightly, were against his own. When he released her, Sheila Laugh-

lin stood very still, arms limp at her side. There was something in her eves that reminded him of the stars on a

velvety black night. "Man kisses woman after five thou-

sand years," her voice came to him detached and far away. "By the ghost of Saint Patrick, Man hasn't forgotten a thing,"

Even then, tasting his lips and feeling his strong young body close to her, Sheila could not be sure. She had aroused within him something alien to his way of life. Yet, watching him as he waited for her to leave, she knew she had lost. Knew she had failed to

matter."

take his mind from the single track of duty it had been trained to follow. Nothing on earth would keen Jerry Rand from turning her over to the mercy of the High Council once they landed on earth. She knew this, and as she turned and left the room, there was a dull, hopeless ache in her heart that made Sheila feel even more alone in a vast world of men. She must plan her campaign accordingly; and slowly there arose in her the idea that there must he some way to arouse men once more. To make them realize the priceless, age old heritage of woman and the things they could give. Once outside the control room. Shella Laughlin's chin lifted and her eyes grew cool and determined. There would be a way.

"LOOK," Rad Wallace said. "If that ain't Harrison LeFarr's space dreadnaught at the far end of the space-nort. I'm a Martian potato hus."

They stood together in the control cabin, Jerry Rand piloting the X10 skillfully toward its space dock while Shella Laughlin and Wallace watched

at his clhows.

Rand studied the sleek hull of Le-Farr's ship. When he turned, his face was grim.

"It's LeFarr all right," he said.
"Ite's been here long enough to have every space cop on the force waiting for us to land. There isn't a man in East Station who will helieve that we attacked LeFarr's ship in self-defense."

Sheila Laughlin watched them questioningly, first the fat, stocky Wallace, and then the slim, hard mouthed Rand whom she had learned to care for so

"LeFarr has complete control here," Wallace said, understanding how little she had been told. "He is the greatest

scientist on earth. His laboratories turn out the population of the earth. His word is tops with the High Councill?

"But if he was also looking for me,"
Shella protested, "tell him that I am
safe with you. That should settle the

"It won't," Rand said shortly. "He wants the credit for discovering you. I had special permission from the High Council to search for the missing treasure and I'm going to collect my own reward."

"But what are we to do?" Wallace demanded. "LeFarr will hoard the ship and demand that we turn over our treasure. When he sees the girl, he'll go wild. What could please him more than to show her to the High Council and demand his due reward?"

"I have a plan," Rand said coolly.
"Slingo is waiting in the hold of the X10. As soon as we dock, Sheila will join him there. Tonight when the ship is deserted, Slingo will take her to my apartment and she will he safe from LeFarr."

"And if I don't choose to he pushed around like a pet mummy?" Sheila asked. "What then?"

Rand whirled about, his features drawn and determined.

"It will be well to understand," be said, "that you have been found by my expedition and that you are my preperty. At the meeting of the Council of March, which is scheduled for the coming fifth day, Slingo will bring you to me as I stand before the High Council. Once in their protection you will be safe from LeFarr. The fame of your discovery will be in my hands and the Council will do with you what will be of most henefit to our society."

Sheila Laughlin was suddenly speechless with rage. She stood alone, staring away from them, down at the strange space-field that seemed to rush up to them with impossible speed.

It was truly a strange world she had awakened in. A world far advanced mechanically, inhabited by men who held no love or pity in their souls. It would be useless to argue now. Later perhaps, a plan would present itself and if it did, she would be ready.

THE X10 slipped into dock silently, bounced back against nowerful shock cushions and the motors went dead. At once the landing platform was covered with waiting space officers. The outer door of the dock swung open and Harrison LeFarr ran across the platform, several uniformed men at his heels. They watched him through the heavy quartz windows as be reached the lower level of the X10 and entered

"This is it," Wallace groaned. "We'll lose the girl, and our necks. LeFarr is after his pound of flesh this time, after what we did to his ship

and his pride," There were hurried voices in the corridors below and footsteps sounded on

the stens.

"Ouick!" Rand grasped Sheila Laughlin's arm and drew her hurriedly away from the control board. He pushed a small door in the wall to one side. "Through this and into the ship's hold. Slingo the Martian will

see that you are safe." He pushed her through the opening almost roughly. Below nitch dark steps, Sheila heard Slingo's voice coming up to her in a harsh whisper.

"Stay close to the wall, my Lady. That Captain one smart fella. Slingo will see you don't get burt."

In the control room Rand and Rad Wallace waited.

LeFarr entered first. The three men with him were dressed in stiff blue

space patrol uniforms. LeFarr stopped short, looking about in amazement. It was evident that he had expected to

find some rare treasure here. Harrison LeFarr was a slim, stoop shouldered man with graving hair and

bushy eyebrows that jumped up and down as the muscles of his face quivered with anger. His eyes, black as night, darted searchingly around the

room and rested finally on Jerry Rand. "Where is it?" His voice cracked like a whip as he panted with the exertion he had undergone. "Where is the treasure that you took from the capsule?"

Rand curbed an impulse to smash his fist into the man's hateful face. He stood with hands clenched at his side judging each word as it fell from his tight lins. "There is no treasure." he said.

"The fifth capsule was empty like the others." Rad Wallace chuckled audibly.

LeFarr was raging. His jaw muscles worked convulsively. "I saw you take that cansule on

board," he roared. "You would not have returned so soon if it had held nothing. I demand, as a member of the High Council, to see what you have brought back."

Evidently the officers who were with him, had grown nervous with their assignment.

Perhaps," one suggested, "the Councilor was mistaken?" LeFarr twisted about like a crazy

man. He started to shout again, then caught himself. Words came from his lins smoothly, with the quiet precision of a machine

"Perhans." he admitted. "I am wrong. But I was not mistaken when I accused this young fool of attacking my ship and attempting to destroy me. For the time being I demand that he be held in prison at Captolia.* Later I will see that he is brought before the High Council and properly punished for his deeds."

"Take it easy," Rand cautioned.
"I have a full crew of men who will swear that I fought you in self defense.
Men are still free in this country.
When I am proven not guilty, you will be the one to suffer."

LeFarr seemed about to explode with his own importance. Turning toward the still hesitant officers, he shouted: "Did you hear me? Am I not one of

"Did you hear me? Am I not one of the members of the Council? My word is law."

The men circled about Rand.

"We hate to do this," one of them said. "We have no choice."

Rand turned quietly to Rad Wallace. "Take it easy Rad," he cautioned. "We'll have our round later. This is

LeFarr's turn to be tough, so let's go quietly."

They were led from the cabin to the sun-splashed field. Official cars waited

sur-spasshed nedd. Unical cars waited to take them away. Somewhere in the XIO, Slingo and Shelia Laughlin crouched in the darkness, waiting for the safety of night in which to leave the field and hide where Harrison LeFarr couldn't find them.

THE Chamber of the High Council

was a seething mass of men. This was the Council of March and today all the important cases of the year would come before the aged brain trust that ruled Earth. The chamber itself was nearly a mile in length. Great radio-screens carried the slightest whisper booming to every corner.

Press and radio-screen men had been pouing in since early morning. The case of Rand vs. Councilor LeFarr had

received wide flung publicity. Although no question of its outcome had been raised, the affair held a certain importance.

The story of Sheila Laughlin had been carefully suppressed. Still, rumor had whispered that something strange and wonderful was in the air. Press and radio-screen outfits could ill afford the chance of missing a story that might eclipse all history.

At one o'clock the High Council filed in and took their places on the rostrum. There were twenty men, gowned in dull gray rohes and longcurled wigs. Harrison LeFarr took his place among them and his appearance sent a stir of excitement through the

audience.

The High Judge, old and wise, his face stiff with wrinkles, arose and tapped lightly on the sound board. The radio-screen sent the crash of his hlow

radio-screen sent the crash of his hlow across the chamber and the silence that followed was complete.

The High Judge waited, a minute passed, then his voice came hreaking

across the room through the speakers.
"We are about to hear the stories
of two men who say they have been
wronged. We who sit here must judge
carefully if there is to he proper punishment. We ask that you refrain from
expressing yourselves in any manner
until this council is closed."

In the press hox under the rostrum reporters moved about quietly. The chamber was husbed in expectation, Jerry Rand came through the low door from the cell room, followed by the shambling hulk of Rad Wallace. They sat down on the level below the High Council.

Harrison LeFarr arose and without hesitation stated his case.

"My ship and my men were attacked in the moon pit, Cassini, while searching for valuable treasure." he said

^{*}Captolia—Earth's only prison. An escapproof building close to the Council Chamber, maintained especially for political prisoners.

calmly, "This man Citizen Rand turned his guns on us without hesitation, destroying our cargo and in the battle that followed be attempted to murder us all. No answer that he may give will justify that attack"

At once the press section was alive with action. Radio-screen projectors carried LeFarr's accusation to a waiting world. LeFarr, men knew at once, was so sure that he would win over Rand, that he had taken no trouble to

prepare his case. Jerry Rand sat quietly, his chair

drawn close to Wallace. The black

prison suit of Captolia covered his body. He stared at the floor, seemingly disinterested in what was happening. The High Judge arose once more, mopped his face with a clean handker-

chief and looked about him at the vast audience "We have heard Harrison LeFarr's

story," he said. "It is well known that

his work is almost beyond estimate in its importance to us all. The word of such a man cannot be lightly tossed aside."

THE old man turned gently toward Rand.

"Stand up, Citizen Rand, and tell us why you committed this seemingly insane act. If there be justification, we would know of it." Rand shot a quick glance at Wallace

and the old warrior grinned "Give 'em hell," he said quickly,

"I'm with you all the way." Rand went to his feet stiffly and

walked before the High Judge. As he turned toward the chamber his knees shook under him. A body that functioned perfectly behind the guns felt awkward and out of place here.

"You have heard the truth," he said in a low voice. "We did attack the dreadnaught of LeFarr-in self defense. More than that, I would do the same again if it were necessary."

He tried to go on talking and found himself suddenly drowned out by the deafening shout of anger that went up from the crowd. Men were on their feet protesting. The radio-screen proiector, trained on his face, was white and hot with scrutinizing light. The chamber was in an uproar. The High Judge sprang to his feet and clapped his hand down hard against the sound board. Repeatedly he pounded for

silence and gradually the tumult died. Men continued to watch Jerry Rand with murder in their eyes. "Attention!" The High Judge had restored order. "We admit this man's own testimony is damning to himself. This council will hear him finish."

He turned to Rand, waiting for him

to go on. "LeFarr has done wonderful work

among us," Jerry Rand admitted. "He is known for his improvements on our men and our land, I myself, came to earth under his skilled fingers. Yet, not six weeks ago this Council sent me in search of a great treasure. men supplied money for my needs, that I might prove that such a treasure existed."

"And did you bring back our money?" a voice taunted from the gallery.

Rand looked upward, his shoulders

erect and proud. "I brought more," he answered, "I was within grasning distance of that

treasure when LeFarr's ship attacked the X10. I tell you I am as shocked as you are that such a man should stoon to such an act."

LeFarr sprang to his feet and in a voice taut with rage, shouted to the chamber.

"Don't believe this young fool. I tell you he turned and sent his guns firing into my dreadnaught."

The High Judge raised his hand.
"Let Rand finish," he ordered.

"Let Rand finish," he ordered.

"There is yet time for you."

LeFarr sank back, hands clutching

the arms of his chair. Blue veins stood

as much again."

"If I am to be judged," Rand said coolly, "I should be judged as a man on equal terms with Harrison LeFarr. His position does not make him im-

mune. We men are equal."

A faint cheer came from the rear of

the chamber and died abruptly.

"I know not why he sent his ship against mine, unless he wished personal glory. I fought to the best of my ability to outwit a pirate craft. I would do

THE High Council was puzzled by this man who dared be frank about his act. Men in the chamber sympahized now with Jerry Rand. The liked the clear ring of his voice and the

way he reminded them of freedom.

LeFarr was ready for a reply. He crossed the gallery and stood before Rand. When he spoke it was with the gentle cunning of an animal who had

trapped bis adversary.

"We have beard great words from
this criminal who seeks to cover his
trime with talk of freedom. I am sorry
that I was on the ship that, as he so
disarmingly puts it, deliberately attacked him. Ask him where the
treasure is that he brought from the
moon pit, Cassimi. I too was in search
of it, and perhaps if he had not sent his
camons against me, this chamber could
gree you the condents of the space

He returned to his chair with the Higb Council and sat down contentedly. The place was loud now with whispering. Men turned in their seats as though seeking an answer to his

challenge. The High Council awaited Rand's reply.

"We've got him by the scruff of the

"We've got him by the scruff of the neck," Rad Wallace whispered. "He thinks we failed. Slingo has done his

job well."

Rand nodded slightly and went to his place before the Council. The audience was waiting. Waiting for something; they weren't sure what. Every

thing; they weren't sure what. Every radio-screen projector was on his face. "I was sent on a mission," Jerry Rand said simply. "I did not fail in

my duty to you."

LeFarr came forward in his seat, lips

straight and white. He was silent, waiting.

"I brought a somme to carth," at andsaid and the chamber was a vast asid and the chamber was a vast cetrified box of tension. "I felt that this somme would face certain death in the hands of those who would take her body apart for science. With the permission and the protection of the High Council I am ready to greater the first woman who has seen this earth in five thousand years, A girl who is fresh and thousand years, A girl who is fresh and seen askep through the sage. In the scace cassive of fee."

Slingo the Martian stood at the door, waving his arms excitedly. The chamher was silent, waiting for the impossible. Rand started toward the door, then stopped in bewilderment. Behind him, LeFar started to chuckle. RAND thought he heard in that laugh, the reason for Sheila Laughlin's failure to appear. Slingo, his pin head bobbing in excitement, dashed across the rostrum to Rand's side. His eyes were wide with fear and his lips moved rapidly before he

managed to find his voice.
"The girl," he cried in horror. "She

is gone, my Captain."

The color drained from Rand's face.

He grasped the little Martian's shoul-

ders, holding him at arm's length.
"What?" His heart was sick and
angry. "But you were to see that she
came here today."

Slingo's head dipped foreward in humiliation.

"I am truly sorry, my Captain," he

muttered humbly. "The girl and I go to your apartment like you say. She seem very happy there and I do not have to watch her close. Then, today when we are to come here, she is gone. I look everywhere and I cannot find. At last I can look no longer, and I must come and tell you."

Rand released the little fellow, realizing his last card had turned out to be a deuce. There were no words, now, that would clear him from LeFarr's trumped-up charged. He was at the

mercy of the High Council.

He turned slowly, and caught the quick look of triumph in LeFarr's eyes. The challenge was too much. With one long bound he was at LeFarr's side, arm upraised.

"You filthy...!"

A heavy fist crashed into his face and he went to one knee, burning pain rushing through his brain. He realized that to insult a member of the Council without first proving that member worthy of an insult, was unforgivable. The officer of the chamber stood over him, rubbing a hairy fist.

"Sorry!" be said. "I had to do it."

Rand came to his feet unsteadily, sbaking his head to rid it of pain. LeFarr bad been waiting his chance. "This man has proven his own

guilt," he said, turning to the High Judge. "He has failed to produce the girl. I could have brought her with me, had it not been for him. I demand

that he be sentenced to Captolia for his crime."

"What can you say for yourself, Citizen Rand?" The High Judge's

voice was cold and even.

Rand was silent. Without Sheila, his story was impossible. It was use-less to fight now. He stood with bowed

head, awaiting sentence.

The High Judge sank slowly into

"This Council has no choice," he said. "You are sentenced to ten years in Captolia. Your crime has been serious but fortunately no great harm bas been done. Perhaps you will come to us again with a full understanding of what you have done, and be a better man for your years without freedom.

That is all."

Dully, Jerry Rand was aware of the arms that went around him as be stumbled away from the chamber. Voices of condemnation crashed into his brain and the face of Councilor LeFart lereed into his. Slowly he went with the officers of the court and they took him into the dark tunnel that led across the court and into Earth's prison, Cappolia.

IT WAS on the fifth day after Jerry Rand had entered the undergound prison that he first heard from the outside world. At noon each day, he mingled with the other prisoners in the lighted lobby of Captolia. From them he learned of Shella Laughlin and the course she had chosen to pursue.

At first he could not believe that the

Irish girl had turned upon him. Yet, from the guard that walked by his cell each hour, Rand managed to get the whole story

"This woman you talked of," the guard said. "She is real! She is on

carth/" Rand stood close to the bars, watching the dark, eager face of the man in uniform as he waited there, watching the reactions that crossed his prisoner's face

"You're mad." Rand said but his heart was pounding inside him and for the first time Captolia seemed brighter and less frightening. "She would not dare let her presence be known."

"But she has," the guard insisted. "She is even now in the apartment of the High Judge and you are a free man. The High Judge is away, attending to that miserable rebellion husiness in the east. When he returns, his power will set you free. You will be acclaimed for what you have done. Councilor LeFarr has already approached the High Council for permission to remove from the girl's body certain atomic particles that he can use in his laboratory. The entire thing is a vast success."

"But I should be set free at once." Rand insisted. "The girl proves that my story is true."

The guard looked unhappy,

"You should be set free and acclaimed as a member in good standing of the High Council," he agreed. "Unfortunately no man has power to do this but the High Judge. He will return in five days, and then. . . ."

That was all. Nothing Rand could say would set him free until the great sage returned. He knew this, and was silent. His mind asked innumerable questions about the girl. Questions that were answered slowly as he listened to the men about him.

THAT first day Rand learned little. But he knew now that Sheila was alive, and strangely enough in the custody of the High Judge himself. From then on, Rand waited to be freed, Two days passed, then three, and again the guard stopped at his cell, and standing close to the bars said:

"Come here. I have something to show you." "Show me the key to this filthy den,"

could relish "

Rand said savagely. "That is news I Still he listened and learned of Sheila's coming to the high council, How she had appeared and been wel-

comed. She wasn't the Sheila Laughlin he had known. The picture he had procured from the guard convinced him of that,

"This girl is re-awakening the world of men," the informer said. "She has talked and sung and laughed her way into the hearts of us all. Her pictures have been thrown by radio-screen and paper into every corner of the world." Then in an awed voice, "She may become our queen and her power will be over us all."

When he had gone, Rand studied the picture he had tucked heneath the cloak of Captolia. It was Sheila, her body thrown carelessly across a couch of gold. Her breasts and hips were covered with tight cloth and her smile beckoned in a way that told him she was driving men wild with newly awakened desires. Rand tried to understand her deserting him when he needed her most. He tried to justify this seduction of an entire world and somehow his heart was only made heavier and sadder with the attempt. Sheila Laughlin was lost to him forever, and even her own soul was lost. She, a single vibrant woman, had lost her hody to a world that helonged entirely to men.

DURING the exercise hour, standing alone by the lobby wall. Rand was suddenly startled by a familiar voice close to his elbow. He pivoted about, facing the ruddy-faced Rad Wallace.

"Rad!" He felt suddenly alive. "How in thunder . . .?"

Wallace pushed him out of sight around a corner of the wall. Half crazy to know what was happening

outside, Rand could hardly control himself. "lerry. I've got to talk fast." Wallace said. "I'll have to be out of here

when you return to your cell. If I'm caught inside ..." Rand nodded.

"Go on," he urged. "Shella? What has happened . . .?"

"Never mind about her," Wallace scowled, "Listen, LeFarr has arranged for your escape. He let me in here through the private tunnel. Only members of the High Council have keys."

"LeFarr?" Rand was bewildered. "Right. Don't ask me why. He wants to get you out. He wants you to be ready in your cell at midnight.

The guard will release you. You are to follow him and ask no questions." "But LeFarr." Rand protested.

"He's no friend of ours. There must be something wrong."

"You're darn right there is." Wallace agreed feverishly. "And he'll probably take the first chance he has to murder you. It's the only way out, and I'll be around when trouble pops,"

"But why is he doing this?" Rand asked. "He's safe as long as I'm here. There is no advantage for him to free

me," Wallace's face was set in grim, hard

"The High Judge will return soon, and his return will free you," he said.

"But LeFarr needs you tonight. If you fail to do as he says, he may bring up the charge of you attacking his ship and have you thrown back in here. Once you are outside and the High Judge is here, you will be safe. If you follow LeFarc's instruction, we may be able to pin some charge on him. I have a feeling that he wants you to influence Sheila in some way, so that she will submit to his knife before the High Judge returns. If he does, we'll stall and find out just what he's after."

"Where is Sheila now?" Rand asked. "I've heard of what she has done." "At the Sky Apartment," Wallace answered. "She's taken over the living quarters of the High Judge. Her word is the world's command to jump through a hoop. She has some plan

but I can't figure it out." "But I don't see what I can do." Rand said. "She failed me before the council. She has no feeling for me other than that which will better her position here."

"I'm not so sure," Wallace answered slowly. "I can't figure the girl out. The question is, will you escape or not?"

Rand felt suddenly disgusted with the part he had played in Sheila Laughlin's life. She had pretended affection for him. Had led him to believe, . . . "LeFarr has the key to some puz-

zle," Wallace was saving. "I think we can outwit him, once you are outside." Somewhere on the far side of the lobby the cell warning bell crashed.

Wallace grasped his hand firmly. "I've got to get out of here fast." the old warrior said. "Tonight at twelve?"

"I'll be ready," Rand said mechanically.

He turned away and walked slowly toward the line of men who were returning to their cells.

A T eleven thirty the long cell block was dark and silent. The moon crept through slitted windows, lighting Rand's cell with long figures of silver. For minutes he sat at the edge of the cot, wondering what he should do when the time came to meet Sheila.

Try as he might, Rand couldn't figure out why LeFarr needed him. If Shelia Laughlin was in the Sky Apartment, why didn't LeFarr go to her and ask permission to proceed with his work? For a while Rand toyed with the idea that Shelia was using LeFarr to free him from Captolia. Then he realized that had it not been for Shelia, pen pince. No. Shelia Laughlin had a deeper plan. He gave up, shrugging bis shoulders, and waited.

A stealthy movement came from the corridor outside. Rand stood up, waiting, hardly daring to breathe. A voice, hushed and guarded, came through the heavy door.

"Prisoner Rand?"

"Right!" Rand answered in a harsh whisper.

A key grated against steel and the door swung open. Rand could see the hunched, uniformed figure waiting

just outside. "Follow me!"

The guard's voice was low and gruff.

They went silently along the black hall

and into the main lobby. At the steps that led to the tunnel, the guard halted, putting a restraining hand on Rand's shoulder.

"The guard will pass in a minute." He was familiar with every move that took place within the prison.

They crouched against the wall as footsteps approached. A dark shadow went by them, in the direction of the main gate.

"Now!" He followed hurriedly and in a

minute they were swallowed into the tunnel that led to the main chamber of the Council. Then Rand heard voices ahead of him and a torch flared up against the tunnel wall. Harrison LeFarr's voice spoke to him from beyond the glare of light, warm and

yond the giare of light, warm and friendly.

f "Glad you made it, Rand," LeFarr said, and then to the guard who had d helped Rand escape. "Back to your

post. When they discover his escape, turn the case over to me. I'll protect you."

There was a hurried exchange of tinkling coins and the guard went back

tinkling coins and the guard went back from whence he had come. "Come quickly," LeFarr said, "The

girl is in the Sky Apartment. We are to go there at once."

Warily Rand followed. They reached the door to the main chamber. It was deserted. Yet Rand felt sure that Rad Wallace was somewhere about. Almost across the great, empty hall Rand froze with a startled cry in his ears. It was Rad Wallace's voice hurtling down to him from the halcony.

"Duck, Jerry! They're on your neck!"

HE had been waiting for something like this. When action carine, Rand was ready, From the corner of his eye he saw three men swing away, from the balcony on long ropes that were tied somewhere above. They came planmenting down toward him. At the same time, LeFarr pivoted, my gun thrust forward. His face was black with hate. Rand bent over suddenly and with

all his strength sprang forward, tackling LeFarr at the waist. He was aware of the sudden sputter of a ray gun, a scream of pain as one of the men on the ropes fell headlong into the chairs behind him. The hody was burned and broken as it hit.

As LeFarr went down with a loud grunt under Rand's onslaught, Rad Wallace grabbed the empty rope and slid down quickly. LeFarr's other

men were on their feet, coming on the

LeFarr twisted and fought hack sayagely, trying to break Rand's hold on his waist. The ray gun had twisted and his fallen from his limp fingers. Randar came from his knees with clenchedges, Rand fists. With unboy fury he sent a crashing blow into LeFarr's face. His hand ripped into soft flesh and camendary away red with blood. LeFarr fell backward with a groan, his cheek open

away red with blood. LeFarr fell backward with a groan, bis cheek open and bleeding. Twisting around, Rand found a ray gun full in his face. Wallace was busy

with the third man who had swung from the rope. Rand raised his arms slowly, wait-

ing for a chance to break forward.
"I think we have had enough of this comedy of errors!"

The booming voice of the High Judge came from the empty rostrum. Wallace dropped the man in his heavy grasp and stood painfully erect. The gumman who covered Rand, dropped his weapon burriedly, a look of fear crossing his face. They turned as one man, toward the dignified figure above them.

"It is well that I happened to return," the High Judge said quietly. He held no weapon, yet his position

was more deadly than a show of arms. No man dared question his rank. Now others, aroused hy the shot, came from the rooms ahout the main chamber. Guards appeared from the tunnel and stood about the room, weapons drawn. "I'm sorry," Rand said, hut the

High Judge held up a warning hand. "We will adjourn to the Sky Apart-

is ment," be said. "What I have to say concerns only Councilor LeFarr, your d man and yourself."

His voice was stern and yet the twinkle in his eye hetrayed something

in the favor of Jerry Rand.

"As you wish!" It was LeFarr, on
his feet, face bleeding freely from

Rand's hlow. "We attempted to stop the escape of this prisoner. You arrived to assist us in the effort." Was he mistaken, or did Rand see that twinkle again. hidden under the

gray pouches that all but obscured the High Judge's deep set eyes? They followed him toward the ela-

fliey followed him toward the elaflyer that shot skyward into the tower of the council huilding.

of the council huilding.

Rad Wallace had been right. Shella

Laughlin had changed the apartment
and herself since they had last met on
the X10. The Sky Apartment bad
always heen a great, simply decorated

place. Now, as they entered, Rand saw the change that had taken place and it took

bis hreath away. She'la had left her mark on everything. This, then, was the home of the World Queen.

The ten great rooms had felt the touch of her hands and the color of her personality. They were furnished with rare fahries and deep, controbble furniture. Soft, translucent curtains covered every virindow with pastel blues. Deep blue rugs and gold furniture changed the sky apartment to a vast feminine dream world. This, then, he had brought around her a setting to enhance the result of the deep with the state of the

r. "You are startled by the changes defere," the High Judge smiled. "In a moment you will be even more surter prised."

power.

He clapped his old hands together and a servant appeared at his side. "If the Earth girl will come now?"

THE servent bowed and west every through the damps before one of the curved stors. LeFarr ast down, whiping blood from his face. Rand remained on his feet, hating what he was about to writness. He heard Rad Wallece gasp with wonder and turned as about to writness. He heard Rad Wallece gasp with wonder and turned as being the store of the sto

Shella's hair was combed out black and long with a great rose worn at the crown.
"You asked me to come?" She went toward the High Judge, seemingly

toward the High Judge, seemingly ignoring the others, and sat on the arm of his chair.

The High Judge coughed and a smile

of delight parted his thin lips.
"I hoped you would come," he corrected gently. "We have a problem

that must be discussed soon."

It was obvious to Rand that the girl beld them all with her spell. Through her whims she had gained a place over the entire Council. He shuddered at the thought that she had tried to sway him in the same manner, only to turn against him when he needed her so badly.

Sheila turned slowly, deliberately, until their eyes met. She slipped from the chair and walked toward him, her eyes warm and perhaps slightly mocking. With a tiny hand on his sboulder she looked up into his face.

"It's Captain Rand," in mock surprise. "Where have you been?"

He drew away from her touch, feeling much like a small boy. She could bave saved him from Captolia had she

?" wished to do so.

"There must be two women on earth," Rand turned away from her and spoke deliberately to Rad Wallace. "This is not the woman who professed to enjoy my company."

"Don't be a fool," LeFarr shot at him, "The female creature is of many moods. We humor them all. Now it is necessary that we all work for a common good. Bury your petty differences and proceed with the discussion."

His words sent a shiver of fear through the girl. She seemed suddenly small and afraid against the background of the bigger things about her. She went close to the High Judge, seeking his protection.

The old man placed a fatherly arm

around her waist. nt "I think," he said slowly, "That a

few explanations are necessary. I am ready to sit in judgment when they have been given."

"Wait a minute," Rad Wallace begged. "I'm just an onlooker here, but what's all the mystery?"

m "There is no mystery," the High Judge said, "We are working at cross purposes. Harrison LeFarr wished to be perform a delicate operation on this girls body. We have been unable to convince the that it is necessary if abe is to locked upon her and finds her pleasan, even necessary for its continued existnce. For some reason best knows to to, herself, the female has insisted upon first seeine Citizen Rand.

"Councilor LeFarr took the liberty of releasing Rand personally. His right to do so will be questioned in due time. For the present, the fact that Rand is bere will suffice"

"I'll have no part in this business," Rand protested. "LeFarr released me only to kill me. The girl has shown her interest by letting me be thrown

into Captolia when her appearance was enough to save me."

"You're a fool," LeFarr snapped,

"You attempted to escape. Only my presence . . ."

P AD WALLACE's face grew an

angry red. "I can blow that story wide open,"

ly. Now he raised a thin hand for

silence

be a member of the Council for his great discovery and will be treated on the same level as Councilor LeFarr. All other charges against him are

dropped." He hesitated, and then, pointing a

kindly accusing finger at Rand, went





or teeps.

"We will leave you alone with the girl. She will tell you things that I'm sure will change the entire situation." Puzzled, and still

hating Sheila for the things she had resorted to, Rand found himself alone with the girl. To his surprise, as the others left the room, her haughty pose vanished. She came to him suddenly and, putting her arms around his neck, started to cry softly. Her cheek against his, the warmth of her smoothly clad body brought back old thrills of desire. "I'm-I'm frightened!" she sobbed.

"I-I don't understand. . . ."

"Oh! Golly, honey. I didn't turn rat on you. Slingo asked me to stay

"Slingo wouldn't do that," he said. "You were my only witness. You were the one thing that would convince them that I was justified in attacking Le-Farr's dreadnaught."

"LeFarr!" She released her hold upon him and stepped back, eves blazing. "LeFarr is the one reason I couldn't come. Jerry, can't you understand? LeFarr wants to take from me the necessary glands to manufacture women in his laboratories. If I had come then, he would have claimed me

as public property and murdered me in She sat down abruptly on the long couch of gold. Her head bowed and her shoulders, bared by the light gown she wore, were bent forward in grief.

cold blood I had to wait."

"Ierry, darling, I'm willing to play the same but not for keeps. LeFarr intends to kill me and I'm afraid to die." LFER fear and her appeal to him, heft a strange feeling in Rand's heart. If it were necessary for her to die, that Earth's population could one more be supplied with women, then it was her duty to suimit to LeFarr's knife. On to care altout her destifuy, Rand knew that LeFarr's partner, Rod Hamilton, had been constantly with LeFarr since they had joined forces years hefore. Hamilton claimed that death was never necessary when any animal went under necessary when any animal went under

"I hadn't realized that LeFarr intended to sacrifice you." His voice was strangely harsh. "As a member of the Council, I could insist that he turn the actual operation over to another, equally competent man. LeFarr is our supreme creator. If he says..."

She stopped him, looking up suddenly, with tears flooding her soft eyes. At last she had found a single spark of compassion in the man. A single thread of hope to cling to. "Do you want me to die?" she asked

pealing expression, but his eyes were still suspicious and piercing.

"If it is necessary that you die, to reinhabit Earth, the sacrifice would be a nohle gesture," he admitted. "It is up to the Council to decide."

Shella lifted her feet slowly to the full length of the divan and settled back full length against the soft cushions. Her face was suddenly soft and her lips

parted slightly over white teeth.
"You kissed me once," she reminded
him in a sleepy, resonant voice. "You

liked me then."
"You were seeking to gain my sympathy for your own good," he stam-

mered, "Even as you are now."

Shella said nothing. In the depths
of her heavy-lidded eyes something as

old as the ages stirred the man who stood over her. He had walked toward the divan as though drawn mechanically by a power greater than himself.

"Say that you played upon my senses to gain the place of queen in my world," he said harshly. "Say that you cared nothing for my life and that you care

nothing now . "
She lifted a slim, bare arm and put her fingers on his arm. It was then that Rand forgot duty came first. There were things within him that no man could finite were though he should have

that Rand forgot duty came first. There were things within him that no man could fight, even though he should have long ago forgotten the rich heritage of woman and the rise and fall of pulsating flesh.

SHEILA LAUGHLIN, in the hours that followed, made Rand realize why she had heen forced to desert him. Made him see why she had slowly built up in the minds of men, affection and

love for what she represented.

They sat across from each other,
Rand listening eagerly, wanting to believe what she said and for the first
time having complete faith in the girl's

story.

"At first I was like a dead fish," she said. "Men looked at me and only noticed that I was different and that I was weak where they were strong.

Through the papers and the radio-

was weak where they were strong. Through the papers and the radioscreen, I displayed my body, my voice, all the power that I could master. They started to grow interested in me. Jerry, it wasn't easy for me to create desire in the world. To make men love a woman when they have so long forgoten what women are."

gotten what women are."
"I'm sorry," Rand said humbly, "that

I ever doubted you."
She smiled gently.

"You'll never doubt again," she said softly. "And I'll never again parade before anyone but you. Before, it was necessary if I were to grow important

world

enough to live and to help you," "You've done a fine job of it." he ad-

mitted She came to him, arms outstretched

appealingly.

"Oh, Jerry," she begged, "vou've got to keep LeFarr from killing me. If this man, Rod Hamilton, can perform the operation. I'm willing to take a chance, If the chances are fifty-fifty that I'll live, it's worth it. With LeFarr, I am no more than a rat, to he cut and tossed

away." Rand stood up, and if Sheila could have realized it fully, she would have made full confidence in the man she now faced.

"I am a member of the Council now."

he said. "LeFarr won't touch you as long as I am alive. I'll fight and slug my way through every argument he cares to make, and you'll go under the knife of Hamilton or none at all."

"You won't forget that I'm yours and that you're to trust me?" she asked hesitantly. "If you let me down again . . ."

Rand drew her close to him.

"I can't give you up," he said huskily, "hut I'll have to give others a chance to protect and love someone as pre-

cious as you are to me." Rand's fight to ohtain Rod Hamilton for the actual operation had succeeded. LeFarr was present and detailed himself to supervise his partner's work. No fingers but Hamilton's would probe

the wound. Rand had confidence that Hamilton would do his best. The scientist was a short, unhelievably fat little man, yet with fingers so long and slim that they seemed an entirely separate part of his body. His face wore its perpetually sober expression and the wrinkled skin around his pouchy eyes quivered slightly as he concentrated his gaze on the girl before him.

LE FARR'S equipment had been hurriedly assembled under the glass dome of the Sky Apartment. Attendants were with Sheila, preparing her for the operation to come. To Rand. as he waited dry mouthed for the thing to take place, it all seemed like a crazy,

impossible sacrifice. Yet, as Sheila was wheeled under the bank of X-ray tubes, he realized that the thing must be done. A waiting world of men demanded it. Sheila's face was white and set with determination. The conditions under which the operation was to take place were sensational to the extreme. Photographers and radio-screen men waited in the outer hall for news. Radio-screens

were focused on the table and every move would go to the screens across the Racks and trave of instruments made their appearance. A group of assistants gathered about Sheila.

Rand stood a short distance away, hehind a thin curtain of sprayed antisentic. His eyes never left Sheila, and once, as she was going to sleep under gentle hands, she held two fingers aloft and crossed them. Rand wondered

what strange fetish this would he. The High Judge and LeFarr stood together. Their eyes were glued on Hamilton

"You are ready?" The old man's eves were misty with concern for the silent figure on the table

Hamilton nodded. A strange silence came over the room. Outside newsmen sensed the change and waited tensely, wondering what word would come from heyond the door. At Sheila Laughlin's head, a tube of amora-red rose and fell slowly, indicating that her heart was working normally. Rand, watching the thin red line of life, tried to moisten his tongue and failed. Sweat

stood out against his forehead.

"CCALPEL!"

Mamilton's hand came down swiftsmillon's hand came down swiftsmillon's hand came down the first fingers moved delty and the men about him crowded closer and listened such a first finger moved the first fine and short first fine first first

The minutes dragged by and Rand stood stiff and waiting. He stood on the border line of sanity, watching the one thing he treasured as it slipped away from him to the brink of death and then returned slowly as the amprared started to pump evenly once more.

This was no operation. It was new, even to the pudgy Hamilton. It was only a theory and no more. Rangroaned as he realized that Sheila Laughlin had one chance in a thousand

of waking from under the knife.

Rand watehod Hamilton's hands as
they darted about over the incision.

Rand wanted to kill. To kill in cold
blood every man responsible for this
crime. Yet he dared not move to disturb them. His eyes traveled the circle
of white faces and saw them silent under the strain. Every eye was glued
to the gitl on the table. Hamilton was
cutting steadily, working as heogh the

figure under his knife were cold meat. Then suddenly, Rand had the feeling man gets when he finds faith in himself. He knew that it was over and Shella would live. Hamilton straightened from his work and an attendantelf the room carrying a precious container. Rand work and had been a substance and the substance in the substance is substanced in the substance in the substance is substanced being the High Judge.

Then Jerry Rand saw something

that made his blood run oold with hortor. Harrison Leffarr, waiting at Hamilton's ellow, suddenly drew a long, wicked knife from his cloak, This was no knife of mercy, but a broad blade used only to kill. Rand tried to blade used only to kill. Rand tried to knife arose showly and the others noticed what Leffarr was doing. Then, from the High Judge's cloak a ray gun appeared. The old sage's voice arose clear and commanding above the murclear and commanding above the mur-

"A fine job has been done, LeFarr.

Move not to destroy it!"

The room came alive with excitement. Men's eyes were torn from the girl as they focused on the silent drama. Rand felt his own ray gun in his hand. His fingers were cold and useless.

"Don't shoot, Councilor," he begged.
"The blast from your gun will destroy

the girl."

LeFarr turned slowly, knife upraised. His face was an expressionless

raised. His face was an expressionless mask but his lips moved. "If you seek to kill me you will de-

stroy the girl," he said. "I have kept my promise. The world will have women. I am no fool that I should wait with the others for what I rightfully should have now. If I cannot have this female, no one will. My life has become useless without her."

"You'll destroy yourself," Rand warned. "You haven't got nerve enough to come away from her protection and fight like a man."

LeFARR'S temper flared. His arm shot out suddenly and the knife in his hand sped through the air at Rand's head. The younger man jumped to one side and the weapon burfed itself in the wall. With a howl of anger LeFarr was upon him and

they crashed to the floor. Rand sent one terrific, hate-filled blow into the man's body and sent him flying back. LeFarr's skull hit the floor with a sickening crunch of bone and be lay still. His neck was thrown to one side, twisted and broken. Blood from the recomend wound on his face covered

the carpet under bis bead.

Somehow Rand knew that Sheila was awake now. He went to her and put his strong fingers over her hand. She breathed more easily and a smile came over her pale face. The two fingers on her right hand were still tight.

ly crossed.

"You've finished one job, once and for all," Rad Wallace said. "I never did like Councilor LeForr."

IT WAS the morning of the tenth day after Shella Laughlin had given new hope and life to a world of men. Shella and Jerry Rand went quietly through the halls of Creative Laboratories. They watched the men who were filling the test tubes of LeFarr's world with serms of a new female population.

"Harrison LeFarr was a strange man," Rand said, as they emerged into the fountain-predominated court before the building. "He created worlds and held the skill to all surgery in his hands. Yet his own greed destroved him."

stroyed him."

Serious as the subject was which
they were discussing, Sheila was so relieved with its outcome that a smile

t touched her lips, e "Am I worth being greedy over?"

she asked.

Rand drew her down to the wide

bench that circled the fountain and held her tightly. "I'm a lucky fool to have you," he

"I'm a lucky tool to have you," he said simply. "But I'm sorry for the others who have to wait. . . ."

"They've waited for five thousand years," Sheila answered softly. "I guess they can wait twenty years more. Besides, aren't you the one who

brought me here?"
He grinned.
"I did but for a while I thought I'd

"I did, but for a while I thought I'd lost you."

"And I felt like the headline attraction of a burlesque show," she admitted. "I had to show them my body to convince them I was worth having

around. I didn't bave much choice."

They were silent, hands entwined, listening to the soft flow of water from the fountain.

"How does it feel, this being mother of a million baby girls?" Rand asked.

Sheila blushed.

"I'll admit it's the easiest thing I've

ever tackled," she said.

Rand drew her to him tightly and kissed her lips. Her body was fragrant and warm against him. They forgot

the bright sun that lighted the court around them.

"In spite of it all," Shella managed to say between kisses, "I still think the old wavs are best."

MENDING THE WOUNDED WITH GLUE

T'S rather difficult to believe that wounded soldiers may be glued together as if they were cracked pottery, but science has been able to perform that miracle.

The old way of treating cut nerves was by

the use of sutures which involved sewing up the wound with fine threads of silk or human hair. But now two modical research men at Oxford have reported a new technique they have been using successfully on animals. Instead of sewing, they bring the two never ends together and use the surrounding tissues to make a degression which is filled with planes. The planes concentrate is ruch in fishrin which acts as an adhesive to hold the never ends together while they mored. The only drawback is that the technique only works if the folium is that if real, although further research may extend its uses.

PERISCO

gus and fired blindly into the occushing figure 216 Rickhart, a young commander of a U-boat, found a new target for his torpedoes. But a weird diary foretold his failure.

DAVID WRIGHT O'BRIEN

THE hard-lawed young Nazi submarine commander had watched the scarcely moving outline of the old sail-rigged cargo ship for well over half an hour now. Watched through the periscope of his gaunt. gray, sinister undersea shark, while in the confines of its steel walls his crew had grown increasingly impatient.

Rickhart-that was the young Uboat commander's name-had the cunning and the patience of a wolf. Five times in the last four months had less cautious commanders in the West African coastal waters stepped brashly into the jaws of O-boat traps only to he blasted to the bottom for their foolhardiness.

Young Rickhart was no fool. To his credit was more tonnage sunk than that of any other Axis craft in this area. On the breast of his dress tunic. when he donned it, one could see the decorations bestowed by the Fuehrer himself in testimony to Rickhart's prowess as a crafty hunter.

There was a heavy fog, which had made visibility through the periscope almost impossible at first. Impossible. at any rate, to the immediate extent of studying the leaky old sailing craft to determine quickly whether or not it was a Q-boat whose superstructure would fall away and guns begin to hlaze the instant the sub surfaced.

So Rickhart had patiently waited,

studying his prey the while through the periscope, straining his keen young vision to make absolutely positive that the ancient sailing bark was absolutely harmless and undefended.

Finally, then, after half an hour or more had passed, young Rickhart pushed his peaked officer's cap back on his closely cropped blond hair, and turned to his second in command.

"Prepare to surface," he ordered. Throughout the U-boat, as the command was repeated, there was a break in tension and a sigh of relief. Men leaped swiftly to their stations, and the craft's electric motors throbbed to

life Commander Rickhart's under-officer, a thin, pasty-faced, dark-haired youngster, Lieutenant Borst, studied his superior covertly from his position at the gauge board,

A leaky sailing scow, young Lieutenant Borst was thinking contemptuously, and Rickhart studies it as if its holds were chocked with bullion, bah! If he fears it so, why does he not give it a torpedo and stand off?

But young Lieutenant Borst was well enough aware that one does not waste torpedoes on leaky sailing carriers you can shell into fragments. Nevertheless, he thought as he did through reasons that were purely personal and had merely to do with his loathing of the cruel, cocky Commander Rickhart. For though the young sub commander was famed throughout the Reich, and a hero to the Axis nations everywhere, he'd never been held in anything hut hatred by the crews he commanded.

Rickhart had left more than one hapless seaman on deck to be sucked to a watery grave in an emergency crash dive, and rumor had it that on innumerable occasions these desertions

had heen too hasty, and unnecessary. The pressure drops were being read now, the only voice sounding in the confines of the sub's bleak gray walls of steel. Commander Rickhart stood by the conning tower ladder, while

above him, three seamen stood ready to throw open the hatch.

Then the tilting ascension of the undersea shark levelled off ahruptly. The hatches clanged, and cold, fresh, blessed air swept down into the U-boat.

They were surfaced.

BRIEF moments later, the crew stood by the deck gun. Commander Rickhart and his under-officer. Borst, stood in the conning tower, and the submarine rode easily in a listless sea.

Lieutenant Borst and Commander Rickhart both had binoculars raised. and through the fog mists were studying the almost motionless old sailing craft which lay a scant two hundred vards abeam.

Lieutenant Borst lowered his glasses, "I see no sign of life, Herr Com-

mander," he said. Commander Rickhart continued to

hold his binoculars on the prev. "My eyes are as sharp as yours, fool," he said. "I am aware that there seems no sign of life."

"Do you think it a trap?" Lieutenant Rorst asked. His tone was just as goading as he dared make it.

Rickhart lowered his hinoculars and stared hard at young Borst until the other flushed pink beneath his pasty checks "That is not a trap, I am willing to

swear Lieutenant." Rickhart snapped. "Order our gun crew to hold fire. Prepare a rubber hoat. I am making an

investigation of that vessel." Lieutenant Borst saluted, covering the look of surprise that came to his

"Very well, sir."

As his underling left to prepare the rubber craft, young Rickhart raised his

glasses again and resumed his study of the seemingly drifting sailing vessel She was a three master, holding deep

on the waterline. Obviously a relic of days long past in West African trading, she brought to mind the recent news Rickhart had received of many such old craft being pressed into service for short coastal cargo runs by the United Nations.

Yet, as Rickhart continued to study her, there was something in the gaunt, grimly gray outline of the vessel in the for, something in the tightly furled can-

was on her sticks and the absolutely lifeless appearance to her, that made the commander uneasy.

But Rickhart had sensed the attitude of young Borst, and sensed, too, something of the tension of the crew as they'd lain a periscope depth for that interval in which he'd watched the messel

He grinned sardonically to himself, shaking off the feeling. Perhaps there was no one aboard. It could easily be possible. In the storms which had ravaged this coast over the past weeks it would be not an unusual matter for the hanless crew of such a miserable skiff as that to have been lost in entirety.

Rickhart didn't like to think that he wouldn't find someone aboard, however. Otherwise, he'd miss the sport of machine gunning the open boats after the vessel had been toothpicked by shelling. He took his plasses from his eyes

again, slipping them into the case around his waist. He could see Lieutenant Borst standing by the inflated

hoat. All was ready. Commander Rickhart descended

from the conning tower to the deck. "Do you want me to take the boat. sir?" Borst asked. "You remain in the tower here,"

Rickhart snapped. "I will personally board our, ah. prize. Pick a crew of four men to go with me."

R ICKHART sat in the stem of the rubber boat as the four seamen rowed him across the calm, onen water to the listless old sailing vessel.

And when they came aloneside the old ship, the sailors in the fore of the inflated boat heaved a line aboard and scrambled for the railings above them -a none too difficult feat, since the old craft lay low in the water.

Rickhart stood up. "Ahov!" he called loudly. "Any per-

son aboard?" From the fog shrouded hulk of the vessel there came no answer.

The first two seamen were aboard the vessel, making their lines fast. The two still in the boat stood by while their young commander scrambled up the

lines to the deck As Rickhart climbed aboard the vessel, he noticed the stench for the first time

imperceptible. The smell of something that has eaten into timber never to be completely washed out again, The fog on the deck was thicker than

it had been along the water. Visibility was difficult Rickhart cupped his hands to his

mouth and turned toward the bridge deck

"Aboy!" he shouted again. "Ahoard?" Again, the fog seemed to muffle his

voice in a blanket of mist and silence. Rickhart spoke to the seaman near-

est him. "An electric lantern."

A steel, battery powered lamp, topped by a leather handle, was flicked on and handed him. Its beam bit suddealy deep into the shrouds of fog surrounding them, illuminating the area of the deck on which they stood with eerie

nhosphorescence Commander Rickhart raised the lantern above his head, so that its heams could play further around the deck.

And then he saw the skeleton It lay perhaps twenty feet aft of where they stood, bleached and gro-

tesque in the scuppers. Rickhart's jaw went hard. A sailor

behind him gasped. The other gave a choking cry. Rickhart's laugh was harsh,

"Little wonder I was given no answer. This hulk is a ghost ship." He snoke the words loudly, a little too

loudly.

Young Commander Rickhart walked to the side of the skeleton, and irreverently prodded the chalky bones with his foot.

Rickhart turned to the seamen who'd followed on his heels. He grinned.

"Interesting prize we've captured, eh?" he asked. "I think I shall give it more thorough inspection." It wasn't strong. It was faint, almost

HE TURNED and moved still farther aft. Around the corner of a low cabin hatch they saw the others -skeletons all, about a dozen, lying at weird interangles against a companionway leading to the bridge deck.

Silently, Rickhart played the lantern

on the bleached dullness of that mass of human hones

One of the sailors, an older member

of the crew, spoke shakily, then.

"If you please, sir. Vessels such as this are unsafe. The very timber of the

deck we stand on is unsafe. If Herr Commander were to be injured-" Rickhart cut him o" savagely,

"You old fool! Do you think I know nothing of sailing craft? Do you think I know nothing of rotted hulks such as this? My father, his father hefore him, and his father before him. were all schooled in sail. My great grandfather sailed vessels such as this off this very coast before you were born. I am no thumb-sucking youngster. I am your commander. Hold your tongue!"

The older seaman cringed back whitely from his commander's rage, his eyes hewildered. Nothing he had said should have caused even Herr Commander Rickhart's notorious temper to blaze like that.

Rickhart turned from the litter of human bone. He gestured toward the rail of the ship, commanding the two seamen:

"Over the side. Wait in the boat

until I return. I am going to inspect this floating graveyard without stupid interference from my crew!" He watched the two seamen scramble

toward the rail in ohedience to his orders. He grinned as they seized the lines and dropped over the side down to the waiting inflated boat

Then he turned back to his inspection of the ghost ship.

The nortside companionway leading to the hridge deck was beyond use, its rails shattered, its rungs crumbling. But the starboard companionway seemed in better preservation

Rickhart went over to it, tested it, and started up to the bridge deck, lantern in one hand while the other clung to the rung above each step.

Up on the bridge, Rickhart stood there a moment, looking down over the deck below. He took a deep breath. filling his lungs with the damp saltiness of the sea fog. Up here the faintly present stench was not so strong.

Commander Rickhart moved over to the wheel, a rotted mess of spokes and lines which almost crumbled beneath his touch. The binnicle before it, once gleaming no doubt, was a thick green-black of sea decay.

Rickhart moved hack to the starboard companionway and descended it gingerly until be was on the main deck again. He saw a half onen hatch cover and eyed it speculatively. Then, deciding against the bazards of such an under-deck investigation, be turned away. It was then that he noticed the half-ajar batch doorway of what had obviously been the captain's cabin,

OUICKLY, Rickhart moved over to it. Playing his light on the rotted surface of the hatch-doorway, he saw that it wouldn't crumble if be opened it still more. He stepped forward and gingerly slid

the covering back, revealing a dark hole helow it. The commander shoved the lantern

forward, and its beams revealed what lay below, illuminating the scene eerily.

There was another companionway, leading downward on an angle into what had once heen a comfortable Master's cabin. And at the far end of that cahin, just faintly discernible on the fringe of lantern's beam, was

a figure in a chair hefore a desk, The figure was, of course, another skeleton

"Ah ha, Captain." Rickhart murmured sardonically, "I bave come to exchange greetings. And what is this? I find you dead, obviously long dead? How so?"

Rickhart noticed then that the companionway rungs looked as if they'd bear his weight. He hesitated, however, arguing mentally against the sudden temptation presenting itself.

He looked back across his shoulder He should not linger here too long. It was dangerous, if a patrolling destroyer were to nose around. And yet, the fog was an almost positive security against his suhmarine's being sighted.

Commander Rickhart, holding the lantern high ahead of himself, started slowly down the companionway into

the cahin. Once at the hottom of the compan-

had hung from there.

ionway, he looked around. There was a beam peg just within arm's reach directly above him. Smiling, the young sub skipper hung his lantern there. Ohviously other lanterns

Now the cahin was better illuminated. On either side of it were bare bunks, the boards of which were warped in decay. In one corner of the cabin was an open cabinet, and in the cabinet was a small arsenal of rusted.

incredibly out-moded firearms. Startled. Rickhart stepped over to the cahinet, examined the guns, then stepped back bewilderedly. The smile

had left his cruel young mouth. "Not that long," he muttered. "It couldn't keep afloat, couldn't remain

unnoticed for that long!" Then the skeleton seated bofore the desk and the far end of the cahin attracted his curiosity. Swiftly, he stepped over to it. With his foot, he jarred the chair, splintering the rotted wood and knocking the bones of the skeleton from it.

Stepping over them, Rickhart leaned over the desk, where on open, vellowed volume had rested between the skeleton's arms.

The script on the yellowed pages was so faded that Rickhart was forced to return to the beam peg in the center of the cabin and remove the lan-

tern from it. Then, with the lantern in hand, he went hack to the desk. Now, bending over the yellowed volume until his nose almost touched its pages, and holding the lantern di-

rectly over it. Rickhart was able to make out the faint, hlurred script, It was written in German, in a flow-

ing, bold hand! "Gott!" Rickhart gasped.

HE REACHED forward and moved the book, half expecting it to fall apart. But it didn't. Thus encouraged, he turned back its vellowed pages ever so carefully until the first page was revealed. Lettered there in

German script, was the legend: "Log of the ship Sinister."

Involuntarily, Rickhart shuddered at the unhappy choice of a name for this vessel. Then, carefully turning the first page, he read the opening incert

A list of ports departed from, A crew listing. Navigational statements. Cargo details. Some of it readable, much of it hlurred.

Rickhart flipped on for several more pages. Then he came to a faintly readable entry which made him pause,

"Picked up cargo lying close off coast tonight, Two hundred blacks. Fifty lost in bringing them from villaze. Holds cleared and they are now stored there. Will . . . clear for night . . . avoid any British warships . . .

possibly . . . vicinity." Ouickly Rickhart turned the crumbling page, only to find that the next page and the page after it were impossibly obliterated. But there was an entry on the succeeding page which be was able to read. "Think . . . made bad choice in

Second Mate Stover . . . No stomach for this job. Sick easily at sight of

blacks chained in holds Too triendly with crew Must watch him." Again Rickhart found the remainder

of the page obliterated. And he was forced to turn half a dozen more this time before he was able to find another entry which he could read.

"This is fifth day becalmed. Crew restless. Blacks in hold beginning . . . stink. Terrible heat. Stover, second mate, tried issue water supply to

Wouldn't stop when told.

blacks. Forced to knock him down. Bevinning to distrust crew.

The next pages were a matted yellow mass of dried pulp, almost a dozen of them inseparably stuck together. Then there was another readable entry. This much longer than any of the others.

"On this sixteenth day becalmed it happened. Open mutiny. Stover leading cress in effort . . . seize vessel ... Personally shot fifteen mutineers . . . First Mate Grenheim with me.

We seized water and food casks, so they will die of thirst and starvation if . . . refuse to surrender. Mate Grenheim taken over bridge deck. I cover from Master's cabin. We hold sweep of versel."

There were three obliterated paragraphs, a mark indicating the end of the entry, then the start of another

legible one.

"No entry vesterday. Stover and mutineers tried for control of bridge, failed in day-long battle. Killed eight of them this time. Only two left, now. besides Stover. Don't know where they get scant subbly of water to keep them alive, First Mate Grenheim badly wounded detending bridge.

Think . . . will die. Probe for shot useless. He grows delirious. Calm and terrible heat unchanged. Blacks must all he dead by non Their stench putrid. Mutineers gave up trying to leed or release them long ago. First Mate Grenheim and myself kept hold hatches under fire in . . . each at-

tempt of mutineers to release blacks." Almost frantically now, Rickhart cursed as he encountered another series of illegible entries. Then at last

he found another which be was able to read

"With death of First Mate Grenheim yesterday . . . am now quite alone. Suspect, however, Stover's two companions are dead and that Stoner's own strength is almost spent. With pitiful food and water supply it is wonder he is not already dead. If I am correct about his fellow mutineers. that leaves but the two of us alive aboard the Sinister. Only one will survive, and I will be that one. Have blan to get Stover to waste last of ammunition this afternoon. If successful, will get him tonight,"

THE page and the entry ended there, and Rickhart turned it quickly, suddenly realizing that he had turned to the final entry sheet in this hideously grim logbook of death.

Rickhart noticed at once that the final entry page was more legible than the others, but that the hand that

wrote it had been far less steady. Eves wide, he bent to read it.

"My plan this afternoon succeeded, Stover, looled by the ruse, expended his last ammunition. He undoubtedly expended much of his last strength. I waited until nightfall, and even then

a little longer, before leaving the cabin. I could sense that he knew I crest across the moonless deck, as he waited almost dead behind his barricade of

empty water casks. I could feel his eyes following my stealthy approach, even though I was reasonably sure he could not see me. The hideous stench coming from the clambed lids of the holds where the blacks died, almost suffocated me as I inched slowly past. Moments later, and I was but wards from the barricade behind which Stover lay waiting. Another moment of cautious approach, and I could hear the faint groans coming from his accursed throat. The tortures of thirst were becoming known to the foul mutineer. . . . My swift rush caught him unable to resist, just as I had anticipated. He was lains helpless on his back as I leaped the barricade. His eves were fever mad, his bearded face twisted in torture, and he screamed at me in a rattling, choked half-human rasp, his horribly puffed libs scarcely able to form the words 'Enslaver!' he screamed, 'You shall die and die again for every shackle you seek to fetter to the arms and legs of God's children! His mad scream enraged me beyond all power of reason. I lost all caution, not noticing the bistol he'd had clutched beneath the filthy tatters of his blouse, and suddenly dravged forth. Even as I raised my rifle butt to bring it smashing down on his accursed skull, that pistol he'd concealed split the night with flame. I felt the bullet tearing hotly into my chest before I realized how I had been betraved by this dving swine. And at that moment the butt of my rifle stlashed his brains across the deck. He was dead. quite dead. One of us had survived. I had been that one, just as I had vowed, The wound in my chest was ugly. I tried to stem the blood to no avail. In the cabin, now, as I write this, I see that the second effort to stem my wound was not any more successful, I shall have to try again, for even now I feel a dizzying weakness, a frightening weakness, as my blood forms a small, shiny bool at my feet."

There was no more. The entry ended there, and the yellowed pages following it were blank. With hands that shook visibly, the young Commander Rickhart leafed back to the first page. Again he saw inscribed in German script:

"Log of the ship Sinister."

And then, down in the lower left hand corner of the page was a small signature which he had not noticed until now. The signature was faded, but still discernible.

"Captain Wolfgang Rickhart," it read, "Master,"

Young Commander Rickhart stared in horror at the signature. His own words of but moments ago, words spoken wrathfully to the older seaman who'd advised him against going over this vessel, came back to him with chilling clarity. "My great grandfather sailed ves-

sels such as this off this very coast before you were born."

And they'd been words of truth. His

And they'd been words of truth. His great grandfather Wolfgang Rickhart, had sailed off this coast—

It was at that instant, he young Richart's eyes were drawn irresistibly to the rubble of bones and the grinning skull that had been seated before the deak, the bones of Wolfgan Richart, that the voice sounded at the entrance of the cabin. The voice that chilled the very marrow of the young Nasi U-boat Commander Richart. A voice that was more of a choked, rasping, scream than a voice. "Enslaver Richart" it is rubble to the cabin that the contraction of the cabin that the contraction of the cabin that the cabin t

VOUNG Rickhart wheeled. Wheel-

and to see a hideous spectre of a man, a tattered, bloody, filthy caricature of a human being atop the highest step of the companionway and glaring down at bim.

"Who are you?" young Rickhart gasped.

The creature began to move down the companionway into the cabin. Teeteringly, relentlessly, And then Rickhart saw its head, or what had once been its head. One half of it was a mess of smashed bone and blood and brain. It couldn't be alive with a skull as badly crushed as that.

But it moved relentlessly on toward Rickhart

"Stover!" young Rickhart gasped. scracely realizing he'd spoken the name.

And then he saw the long sharp marlinspike in the creature's hand.

And in what was left of the creature's face, the young commander read the intent behind that crude weapon. Instinctively, Rickhart's band was

at his side. He found the automatic holstered there, and in a single motion whipped it free and was blasting shot after shot into the body of the creature stumbling toward him.

The din was earsplitting, the reverberations thunderous. The creature halted not a second. Now it was less than two feet from Rickhart, marlinspike raised high in its clawlike hand.

coming onward. Rickhart screamed shrilly, pierc-

ingly, hurling his empty gun into the face of the thing.

SAVE THE PATIENT FEEDING ULCERS TO

ANY doctors follow the practice of not allowing their patients afflicted with bleeding olders of the stomach or upper intestinal tract to eat any food because they believe that if the digestive system does not bave to work the wounds will beal faster. However, the death rate of this ailment is nine per cent and it is the opinion of Dr. T. Grier Miller of the School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania that this figure is at least three times what it should be.

The blow was swift, the marlinspike dug deep through bone and into the brain, embedding itself in Commander Rickhart's forehead as be pitched headlong to the cabin floor. . . .

THE seamen who'd waited alongside the ghost ship for their young commander were never able to explain how that floating hulk of rotted timber had burst so swiftly and uncontroll-

ably into flame. Inside of a moment, it seemed, the entire craft was blazing wildly from

stem to stern. One of the seamen in the rubber

boat tried to get up over the side of the ancient sailing vessel. But his companions prevented any ideas be might have had about delaying them all in an effort to save the commander. They dragged him back into the inflated craft and paddled furiously out

of harm's distance. And it will never be known if the submarine's presence on the surface was revealed to the neighboring British

destroyer by the flames of the old ship, or by the sound of the U-boat's recharging batteries.

For the British destroyer arrived at the scene of the blazing old bulk just as the U-boat was starting its crash dive. The undersea boat never had a chance. Two shells caught it seconds before it started to submerge. There were no survivors. . . .

He does not believe that just because the stomach is empty it stops working but does believe that an empty stomach will contract to produce hunger pages and secrete acids that will aggravate rather than heal the ulcers. To prove his theory. Dr. Miller put 1500 ulcer rationts on a well-balanced diet of substantial meals and showed a death rate of only there per cent. This research may pave the way for an entirely new method of curing ulcers.

THE BATTLE OF THE SEXES

By LYNN STANDISH

Which sex has the edge on the other? Here are a few facts on the subject which answer (?) the question.

NIVERSALLY a topic of heated discussion is the question of the superiority of one sex over the other in a particular field. Unfortunately, of course, emotion has dominated reason in these arguments-and entirely unwarrantedly, for there exists today a great body of knowledge based upon scientific experiments on the differences between man and sugmen in various types of behavior.

The first such study, made almost 50 years ago showed that men did better in motor tests of speed and accuracy of movement and quickness in solving problems designed to test "ingenuity." Women did better in the same motor tests of speed and accuracy when colored cards were used instead of other objects, and they did better in tests of rate memory. In tests of taste smell nitch discrimination of sounds, and in the accuracy of judging weights, there were slight or no differences. In a later series of tests, school people were rated by teachers on athletic antiques, intelligence. shyness, conscientiousness, and good temper. Boys were found to be more athletic, more noisy, more self-conscious, and quicker-tempered than girls. Girls were found to be shy and more conscientious. And, so rated by their teachers, no

difference in intelligence was noted. Hundreds of studies of sex differences have followed these pioneer attempts. Of course, many fields were found where there were no differences or where the differences were too alight to be significant. But major and reliable findings have heen rublished about the topics of differences in physical characteristics, differences in the ability to use the senses, differences in motor and mechatical shilities, and differences in mental and emo-

tional traits. The following have been proved by experiment: Until puberty (and usually even throughout early adolescence), virls advance more rapidly in bright, weight, dental growth, anatomical maturity, and physiological development. The female's brain is smaller than the male's but is beavier in proportion to the total body weight. Women's hearta beat faster and their simple reflexes (like the knee jerk and the dilation of the pupil) are usually quicker. Men have larger muscles than women and excel them in endurance.

test consistently faster in finding differences among colors and in rapidity of perceiving objects. Men endure usin better and usually judge differences. in weight somewhat better than women do. In tests where the sim is to cancel designated

physical strain, and athletic achievement. In the field of sensory discrimination, women

items, women are consistently faster. Other tests of differences in motor and mechanical traits show that boys do better in performances where manipulation of objects, tracing mases, or visualizing spatial relations are involved. Tests of mechanical aptitude, mechanical construction, and knowledge of mechanical things above too, that boys do better than eight. In simple tests of tanging and tracing, no differences have been found,

In tests of differences between the army in mental and emotional traits, several significant facts have been discovered. Women do better than men in nearly all measures of memory. They do better on vocabulary tests, on tests of language usage, and on other tests where verbal association and literal rather than numerical items are inwohed. Men however do better in tests involve ing numbers, geometric ideas, or arithmetic reasoning and computation. On general information tests, too, such as those on current events, scientific discoveries, and historical facts, men score

consistently better. In mental traits, the male sex has been found to be more variable; hence there are more male geniuses than female geniuses-and, by the same token, more males in the feeble-minded class, Girls, as a rule, make higher school marks than boys. But this has been attributed to the slower physical development of promore hope and to the greater dociffey of the virts. Boy rehels make poor acholars !

Studies in the realms of emotional and temperamental traits have reported women to be more interested in persons and personal problems, while men are more intrigued by mechanical things and abstract activities. Women's thoughts were found to stray to subjects associated with personal ornament and to concrete, everyday problems. usually related to the individual human being Men's associations wander to business relations. to money-making activities, and to matters of general and abstract interest. In tests of honesty, no differences were found, although schoolgirls excelled schoolboys in tests of moral knowledge and social attitudes.

When appraising these differences it must be remembered that when the words "is better" were used, the meaning intended was "is better on the average," since overlapping occurs, of course, Even with this consideration in mind, let's expect to have a more scientific arcument tomorrow morning at the breakfast table when the wife uses. "Men are dumbbells." Mony a home conrestore its tranquillity with Dr. Science at the helm, you see.

Scientific



ARE THE WEIRD SYMBOLS, CARRIED BY HALF CIVILIZED TRIBES IN THEIR DANCES, REALLY AN EMBLEM OF SOME WATER-RULING-MOTHERLAND OF THE DIM, DEAD PAST? "ZAMO SYMBOLIC DEMONS REPRESENTING-WORLD-POWERS OF ANTIQUITY ARE THE DEVIL (Cittle hashared and cleam front and, cantain a those-throughd treathons), AND THE DRAGON WHOSE WEAPON IS FIRE. BOTH ARE KNOWN AS "SPIRITS OF EVIL."

226

Mysteries

WHO WERE THE PEOPLE OF THE DRAGONS?

Maybe scientists aren't as religious as most folks, but the fact is they are more interested in ancient devils than gods

If AVE yes even stopped to think that, yellentifically seaking, goth are not as interesting as their respective devisit. The treating as their respective devisit is the the devil is usually to be identified with the god of the compared cellulation. Making has a devil it really a compliment. It means that a stillate is not take the comparing of the comparing of the comparing of the comparing of night have a stillate in the table of the comparing of the prices of the concepting of night have cond that is outsides their own doily. Theremaking him "habot" and he then because the "Spirit of Equi".

"Spirit of Evil."

But, also for the "forevert" of religious styles!

Modern science bestows but a passing glance
at the god of the people it is studying before
it turns to scrutinite their devil! For as you
may infallably trace a people in their migrations
by the god they wornhip, so you may discover
what great civilization they overcame, by studywhat great civilization they overcame, by study-

ing their devil.

There are two main devils whose extent abould
mark them as world-powers in the distant past.

One has hors and down hoofs. He carries a
three-proaged weapon. The wrapon of the other
is the fire which pours from his yavering jave.
He is the Dragon. The former is almost entirely
Athantic. The latter, operably if we include with
the stringer, and it seems at if we will
of all his world-incritible toleras, quoties of all the stringer.

It seems probable that very ancienty—bayond all possible group of dister, the Dragon might have been the colory of the Serpent fields are golden of a connected with water. The backs are golden of a connected with water. The world is the Dragon may be considered as probe that Dragon water than the Dragon water than the through water is a well as "the breathing," as if these phrases were part of its original title. It also seems possible that very undersity, beyond all possible group of dates, a great war and the Fife-Each. Our first, hist of this constant the Fife-Each. Our first, hist of this constant is the Fife-Each. Our first, hist of this constant.

flict is given us by the Allgembis Indians who, scientists till us are Empirically inducted, idiandination, in the Great Lakes region, and produced, indiand, in the Great Lakes region, and produced the float distance of North Amerlia. The Algorithm is mixtuit that before the sun dustrient (End of gloidal priorid) Or the rice of a Sun Empirel'), the Serpent had been attrocked by the Timode-Biel (Fire Engle), and tracked by the Timode-Biel (Fire Engle), and the entire earth! The Timode-Biel we not also, but the case the Sood, and the results

were suilided. The present writer solved "Old Marksman" of the Chippewas (an Algorian tribe) to draw a sylcuter of this Serpent. Painfully and with fuggers stiff treen age, the old man began the drawning. But as it took form, the "Syrapen" was a bugs drapon with three-lood feet, and a great and a present and the suit of suit of the suit of

THOUGHI this is probably the oldest steey of the Dragon, the next in age undoubtedly comes from Senzer. When the kings of Nincesh that their solution translate the Sumerica texts, that the solution of the second section of the second that the second second second second second than a thousand year. Abstraction of the second than a thousand year. Abstraction of the second second

A female dragon by the name of Taimat (which loosely translated seems to have meant "Mother of Chaoe") had created numerous demons of destruction. (This anders life of propagonds even outdoes our modem masters of the art.) With the help of this unboly army, the declared was upon the god. One particularly the control of the control of the control of the propagond of the trouble. He only saide that the four winds help him. As Thamat advanced, with the evident intertine of swallows.

ing him, he hutled the four winds into her open mouth. This swelled her up to such dimensions that she became helplace. Thus he was entitle able to overcome her craftiness and kill her. When Tiamat had been slain, he sliced her open with his award and fashioned the under part of her body into the earth and the unner part into the heavens. Now while elancing around in triumph the god discovered that Tiamat's husband was biding nearby where he could enjoy the spectacle of the hattle. Dragging this ungallant individual forth, the triumphant god cut off the husband's head, and

as a sort of afterthought, fashioned the races of mankind from the blood which was pouring forth upon the ground. The identity of the hero-god of this story changed with each new religion that swept that portion of the Mediterranean. Originally he was either the Sumerlan warrior Ninurta or the god Enlit. Marduk, the deity of Rabylon, was then substituted, but after the rise of Assyria, Ashur (the one who, holding a how and arrow, is shown emerging from the sun-disc) was given the honor. After the rise of the Lews. Ichovah became the "Slaver of the Dragon." while still more recently the credit has gone to

St. George and the story has become but a minor Closely associated with this story was one concerning Gilgamesh who sought the plant of life upon a distant island, and whose journey there took many years. The plant, however, was devoured by the Serpent "Sia" before he

could obtain it.

This story immediately reminds one of the "rolden apples" of the Hernerides, the daughters, of Meanenie, which were guarded by a great sleepless dragon, in the beautiful Atlantic Island which was their home. (From our Greek myths. we will remember that to obtain these "annies" was the twelfth labor of Hercules.) And we should also remember that Vulcan, sometimes connected with Atlantia, the rod of volcanors, had the Greek name of Hephestus. Furthermore, the Greeks called a land out in the Atlantic Ocean "Fair Hinneria," while the ancient name for Iteland was Hithernia, and Spain-Iberia. The Basque language was called the Therian tongue. The main river of Spain, the Ehro, was once the Thorus

The land of Ancient Iberia was, on the other hand, south of Russia, in about the location of the present Georgia. Therefore, the people of Sumer, who were great sea-farers and spoke a Hamitic tongue not unlike Basque, might have, in early days, been connected with the Atlantic lands, since the tongues of the present Russian Therians and the present Basque, though separated by so much territory, are apparently still mutually understandable.*

(now extinct) a most interesting people. Furthermore, excavations of their cities discloses that they were once almost wined out by a tremendous Mediterranean flood which left an eight-foot drift over their earlier cities. Were the earlier Sumerions in contact with the lost Island whose destruction has so deeply rolored the learner of so many different meanles? The Atlantic Island which was supposed to have hern destroyed by this flood? Did Sumer trade with Atlantis and other antedituvian powers? Those world nowers which are today represented by the shadowy tales of gods and demons?

HIS possibility makes the Ancient Sumerians

In the debris of this ancient civilization of antediluvian Sumer, or Su-Mer, as it was probably pronounced a most interesting little figurine came to light. Scientists identified this tiny statuette of a woman as the "Mather-Goddess" whose worship seems to underlie almost every primitive religion shoules that at one time it was extremely extensive.

Her description is most enlightening. She is veiled, the vell being bound across the face just below the eyes. Across the forehead of the figure are six large discs, while over the ears are tiny strands of braided hair bound tightly together in such a fashion that they give the appearance of two ears of corn hanging end

To suggest that they were corn (Americal corp) would be quite unscientific as this food was apparently entirely unknown in "the old world," and in that matter Sumer was no exception. Botampts tell us that corn has taken from five to twenty thousand years to bring it to its present state, with the most probable estimate being somewhere between ten and fifteen.* The Indiana say they received the gift from "Mother Corn," the "Corn Maidens," "Mother Scorpion" or the "Corn People" after the flood, depending on the tribe. Was this the plant which the dragon sported so well? One other physical characteristic of the

"Mother Goddess" which must be noted is her strange goggle-eyes. She is so non-eyed that she unnears to be wearing glasses. As for the rest of her costume-perhaps it would not be unscientific to surpost that the modern Arah and Turkish dancing girls inherited their costume from the ancient goddesa! THE pattern of the Dragon culture is a very

interesting and significant one. The Atlantic area finds it relegated to the underworld, or to the "Spirit of Evil" with some curious and most intriguing exceptions. Those exceptions are "island-cultures"-people who now have more in common, although there is an ocean between them, than they have with their immediate

^{*} Dr. Walker, So. West Museum of Indian * As recently noted by Brachine -- Ep. Antiquities.-Eo.

seighbors. Yet we can trail the Dragon around the earth into the Parids where the totach into the Parids where the totach is held in reversor, but has degenerated into a docadence of detail, with nevertheles, retains its essential characteristics. Between these two carreness, He Americas where the culture Mends from the simple to the complex. What does this culture-pattern mean? If Asia is the

original seat of this culture, why does it not original seat of this culture, why does it not have the oldest and most primitive forms?

Or, on the other hand, if the massive Empire of China with its more complex five-toed dragon, estimated through the more simple, but still decadent and detailed Japanese three-toed tolens, then why are the more complex South American forms cut off by the more simple South American forms cut off by the more simple South American forms cut off by the more simple South American forms.

fornia) form?

Furthermore, why are almost all the people who has the stamp of "The Dragon" long-headed people, with the single striking exception of round-based China? In the light of this fact, is it possible to consider China as the mother of The Dragon?

Is it not more logical to regard The Dragon as having entered China from the Pacific? Especially when we consider that China, in common with all round headed project, trace their descent through the lather, while all the other "Pougle of the Dragon" (with the still questionable exception of early Japan) trace their descent through the mother? What great world-power was it that thou-

sands upon thousands of years ago linked the holoses of Northern Empone with fra-way China? What could the Norse Drugon, Falsh the wife What could the Norse Drugon, Falsh the wife the China of the China of the China of the China of the way week, together with the fact out lines were week, together with the fact which was to the country of the country of the suggest the clash of transaction powers, the most ancient and cultured of which was—The Drugon China of the probability the mounts of the Gentard kingdom?

THE quasion which naturally follows the suggestion is, if Wollow such has emperor of the Strepart Totem, or The Dragon, (the name seems to be used absort interchangeally in the seems to be used absort interchangeally in the control of the seems of the

ound matter how fragmentary, of a "lost writing" in is among other widely-scattered members of this to a great dawn-power.

Furthermore, there should be other scraps of information like that furnished by the Algonkin tribes of a Fire-Eagle vs. Serpent War. Where did this clash, which was to be "chood around the earth," first take place? Where was

the motherland of each of these two mighty totems? Or that strange schism which split the Ancient Totem of the Sea into two powers, sometimes symbolized by two dragons, mother and son, such as we have in the old Norse relic Beowulf, and sometimes symbolized by the Serpent designs and the more decadent Dragon? What can we learn of it? Is it possible that the old Roman "Festival of the Saturnalia," which in new garments we celchrate at Christmas, is in reality but the lost memory of an "Independence Day" once celebrated upon some sunken Atlantic homeland? Yet who was this Saturn. the god it honored, and for whom we have named the seventh day of our week Saturday

or Saturn's day? And what was the power aspinst which he led his people in revol?

Is it possible to sele these threads which have come down to un through the misst of the past, and with the help of legendary fragments from the rich storehouse of Billersets peoples, together with the most nationt written records, reconstruct again something of a patch-week pattern which will add to our knowledge of the ante-diluviam would be selected to the selection of the sel

Of course, we can never learn the entire story, and we must cver carry the spirit of doubt with it so that we may check one type of the spirit of the spirit

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balline Publishing Co., Dept. P-354 DJ Fitts Ave., N. Y. C.

Medi me "THE IDEAL REX LIFE" in plate wrapper of the property of the PRES CIFT (Blue VALUE COMPLETS and property of the parties of delivery if not self-the days. I use order bests and meany will be related. I will be related.



Meet the Authors

M Y ENTRANCE into the w rld was a very informal and unoutentations one, taking piace on April 4, 1921, in the new not-so-little town of Stevens Point, Wacon-lan. It seems that my arrival caused some complications, for my parents found it necessity to move to Chicago shortly after that.

What I remember of my early bit is a long record of filmace: I was—and still ann—an listensely sative person, and I kapé myself to run down that I cought everything from postumona to mumps. The climac of any affection was after three, with definesur mostles of serving as hall-spand, palice hoy, monitor, reporter for the school newspaper, member of gibe closed on devine, room artist, eramed hoy, and treather he missed monologists, which them as deal as the preventional

post. My fun didn't end there, however. On the contrary, it just began. Finishing grammar school without the loss of a grade, luckily enough, I entered Chicago's vast and beautiful Lane Technical High School, and there, amid the wellstocked shelves of its library, I really became acquainted with reading. My introduction to literature had really begun at seven, around which time I absorbed such classics as "Robin Hood," "Kine Arthur," and "Gulliver's Travels," But prior to high school, such activities as marbles. skating, swimming, and cops 'n robbers had occupied all my time. At the end of the third year of high school I wandered from shelf to shelf. fruitleady sesking comothing which as yet I hadn't read, or at least had an inclination to read It was around that time that a friend gave me several old comes of AMATING Streets, and even before I had firsthed reading the first mararine I was a confirmed science-fiction addict. The thrill of those first s-f stories lingers with me yet, though it is something which I have never been able quite to recapture to its early, full extent. Now, however, came a period when I read s.f. exclusively and insatiably, haunting second hand

bookshops and magazine staffs.

In my isst year of high school I neet W. Lawrance Hamille, who not only because one of mybox friends, but also fermidsed new with the
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Chester S. Geler Bill Hamling's success in s-f writing (be's in the army now) turned my mind to a hitherto unreafteed side of this, to me, new and enthralling literature. Very suddenly, I decided that I was going to be an a-f writer myself. I plunged into the business immediately, with the fierce eagerness and determination with which I have always done everything, from playing marbles to making love. I got books on writing from the library, bought up all the second hand and brand new writer's magazines I could find, and studied a-f stories where I had merely read them before. For more than a month I pickled myself with this literary brew. Then I wrote my first story, something or other that had to do with absolute zero. and Bill Hamfing accepted it for the PREP. A second story, which followed shortly thereafter, met with the same success.

Graduation out host further work for the PREP. I found regular home strokes with a four-year technically to the Conventy of the large. I see very contribution, both on the page I see very contribution to the conpaging a large writing time I entered, bovered and stack it out for two years, with a straighton low II managed it, for during that time I collected a zore of registed may be allowed to provide the property of the property of the collected a zore of straight and two prefereds a surgestions, read science follows, are added to the contribution of the contribution of the straight and the contribution of the straight and the contribution of th

girls, and to top it all, passed my exams.

These activities left their effect upon me. of course, both physically and financially, and further college work was impossible. I quit, after (Cowcladed on page 237)

DISCUSSIONS

A MARING STORMS will publish in each baue a selection of letters from readers. Everyhody is welcome to contribute. Bouquets and brickbets will have an equal chance. Inter-reader correspondence and controversy will be encouraged through this department. Get in with the gape and have your say,

"A RIGHT TO SAY SOMETHING"

I have been reading your magazine for so many years that I feel I have a right to say something. I read "Warrior of the Dawn" and found it excellent. Expecting a sequel to it, you can imagine my disappointment when I didn't find it in the February issue. Tell Browne to write one or olse! Besides that, I found the magazine okay, Here's how I rate the stories:

1. "Skulpton Men of Turoter." Carter stories. are always tops with me. St. John is excellent as the artist on these stories. Don't change,

- 2. "The New Adam." 3. "The Persian Carpet."
- 4. "A Pawn for a King."
- 5. "Visitor to Earth." 6. "Ard of the Sunset People," 8. "Phantom from the Film."

The artists I rated as follows: 1. Magarian (always tons): 2. Virgil Finlay: 3. Ned Hadley: 4. Hadden: 5. Rod Ruth: 6. R.

Never in the past have you disappointed me, so bave Browne write a sequel, Nease! ROBERT STAINGET, 660 Powell Street,

Brooklyn, N. Y.



"I got the idea from an old science fiction measure cover-when I out it together, the dem thing worked?"

MORE BURROUGHS

Your February issue of Amatino Stories was very good. How about more issues like this one? The best story by far was "Skeleton Men of Tupiter' by Burroughs. How about more Burroughs? Second was "Phantom Transport" by Leroy Yerra. How about more Lancelot Birry. Horsesses Hank, Hok, etc.? What's the matter with Wilcox, Bond, and Cummines? Especially Cummines

ROWALD GOULD. 2534 Cochran. Los Angeles Calif.

RATES THREE ISSUES

See. First, November issue: "After an Ace," a superb story, dear editor, "Turnerment Tones, Expressman," please very much more of this Topes fellow. "Murder from the Moon," just fair. Best pic was Fuqua for "The Silver Coll." Worst was Jackson for "Nazi Diamond." The cover was absolutely

super. Ditto back cover Now, December: "Warrior of the Dawn," where's the sti.? "The Sphere of Sleep," different. "Monsoons of Death," don't know why. The worst, "One-Way Ticket to Nowhere," just plain rotten. Best pic. Fugua again for "Monsoons of Death." Worst, Jackson for "Planet of the Gods." Please tell him his heroes look muscle-hound. January: "Death Makes a Mistake," "Rats in

two poor stories in the issue, "Queen of the Flaming Diamond" and "The Cosmic Deflector." Best pic, McCauley for "Death Makes a Mistake." Worst, Brady for "The Cosmic Deflector." Now for some constructive criticism: More cartoons, more Binder, Burroughs, Juggernaut

> GEORGE RICHARDSON. 73 Hersey Street, Hingham, May,

More Jones, as von'll notice, in this issue. And we have more on our desk for future issues. Burrought will return, and also Finlay, We'll keep up the cartoons. We hope to have Binder back in the feld spon.-Eo.

BEST FOR HIS MONEY

I have been reading AMAZING STORES since Octoher issue, 1942, and would like to congratulate you on a fine margine. At first I experimented with different margzines and found AMAZING best

for my money. Here are some facts about your magazine:

1. Swell illustrations. 2. Good stories (especially Feb. issue).

3. The size is perfect (in pages). 4. The letters are right for reading 5 Back cover-well drawn.

6. Discussions-recently the discussions have been shorter, but please lengthen it I am sure everyone will agree.

7. Your authors are all good Here is a suggestion; why not have a ballot

so everyone who reads AMAZING can vote and see in the next issue which story came in first, second, third, etc., and how many votes they got?

MICHAEL ANDREWS. 7304 Thoga Street (8), Pittsburgh, Pa.

The editors read fan mail very carefully, and note the order in which the stories are rated; but we don't tip of competition by publishing those results. Only your editor has the inside information that enables him to keep your magazine the top in the field-En.

ELEVEN REST STORIES Sirs:

The first issue of AMARING STORIES I bought was the January 1941 Issue. I have every issue since then. I also buy every issue of Fantastic Adventurer. In my opinion the 11 best stories in Amarros for 1942 are:

1 "Disciples of Destiny," great serial 2 "Adam Link Sayes the World," very good

3. "Tiger Girl," Burroughs' stories are always llswe 4, "The Avengers," McGivern is one of my

favorites 5, "The Return of Hawk Carse," wonderful story 6. "Secret of the Earth Star," very good story.

7. "Blitz Against Japan," very good story. 8. "Crusade Across the Void," one of the best stories I've read. 9. "The Hollow Planet," quite different, very

10. "After an Age," one of the best stories I've read in AMAZING. Binder is a very good writer. 11, "Warrior of the Dawn," the hest serial I've

read in AMAZING STORIES. Your February issue is very good. The best two stories by far were: "Skeleton Men of Jupiter" and "The New Adam." If the second part of this story is as good at the first was, it will be better than "Warrior of the Dawn," CARL TYPON.

1558 N. Commonwealth. Hollywood, Calif.

Let us know if the second part was as road!

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AMAZING DEPTH OF PERCEPTION

I have just finished reading the first instalment of Weinbaum's "The New Adam," and, having an entire evening with nothing to do, I hereby compose my first better to any magazine.

I have been reading your magazine, and your companion magazine. For lastice defendance, for some time. I cannot say that I enjoy all of your states. However, I find that a regular persual of your magazines gives me glimpses of interesting and desirable worlds of thought, a sort of Klay-yam getture—"Better a glimpse of the tavern found than in the Temple but outright."

Such a glimpse is the saga of Edmond Hall, "The New Adam." The story shows a depth of perception of the human mind that is amazing. Perhaps the minds of men work alike, but hy some strappe coincidence. Edmond Hall's life is closely paralleled by my own. I don't have extra-iointed thumbs and fingers, or a distinctly bisected mind but the mind channels of Edmond Hall seem to be merely a summation and crystallization of my own meagre meditations. Therefore I begin to wonder what sort of person is this S. G. Weinbaum. Is this story merely a revelation of his own conception of his own meditations or is it an inspired revelation of some hidden representatives of a future super race? You see, I too am, well, a little ouser. People seem to sense a difference in me, as they did in Edmond, and like him, I find myself hored by the general unthinkingness of all people. Inst what, who, where, and why is this S. G.

Weinhaum?

T/5 CLYDE PARISE, DEML, R&IS,
AUS Retg. & Ind. Sta.,
723 Broadway,

Little Rock, Arkansas.

We greatly regest that Standy G. Weinbaum,
the eather of the story you like to much, and
unkick to dealey spenitle, you roun life, has gone
to ideal place where he tent his best loved character. Edmond Hall, He died in 1985, but his storie
did sot, and in publishing "The New Adom" or
to the story of the story of the story of the
tent of the story of the story of the story
lived to write the fan nevel that sun to follow
'The New Adom." We thank you in his brokely

for your compliments on his story.—Eo. WHERE IS KRUPA?

Where is Krupa? His fluctuations did more for some stories than the authors. Who rewrites E. R. Burreaghe's stories? Or is the old master slipping? Of caurse, I have read all of Surreaghe's tutt, and am an avid fan of his, but still the newer stories don't have the same facination as they once did. And what kind of a mag are we getting row? If we must have half-saked girls, sick' won on the back excer so we oblistes won't think that we are stilling a solety massains.

You seem to have gone in for the Petty girl, and even the incomparable Paul has lost his touch. remember scenes from Amazinic that curdled my blood before I got started on the story. I. FRANK AUTRY.

602 North 23rd Street. Corsicana, Texas

Julian S. Krusa has returned to AMAZING Stores, having been honorably discharged from the H. S. Marines. Therefore, you will have your old toporite back illustrating in his familiar brilliant style. Burrough; still writes his own fiction. and judging from the for mail still writes as well as he ever did. So far this year we have had covers featuring a worskip and a dragon, John Carter fighting a sheleton man, a Fugus gudget-robot, and now a Fugus space ship scene. In fact, since February, 1942, (14 issues ago) we have had only one cover with a cirl on it, and she was fully dathed Perhots you are referring to another magazine.--Eo.

MARCH ISSUE Sirs: I have just finished the March issue of A. S.

- and I think it was great. The stories are rated as follows: 1 "The Metal Monster"-wwell.
- 2. "Victory from the Void"-good.
- 1. "The Light that Killed"-very good, more of this type of story. 4. "Shadow of the Spider"-very good for a new
- writer. 5. "Bring Back My Body"-to to.
- 6. "The Money Machine"-not bad. 7. "Bill Caldron Goes to the Puture"-stunk!
- "The New Adam" was not rated because it was in a class by itself.

Front cover: swell, more of Fugua on the covem. Back cover: very next ROY O'CONNOR.

321 E. 25th Street. New York, N. Y.

Apparently you mixed the true significance of Paul Miles' story! It was the deverest barody on release Cetton are home even send, and it was soultten in all sincerity. Read it over with this in mind. and if you don't get a dozen chuckles out of it. see'll scrite it on the blackboard a hundred times. - Pa

DOESN'T LIKE NEW ADAM Sirs:

- Where in the name of all that's profane did you cet "The New Adam"? It was worse than "Planet
- of Ghosts" if possible. No sense at all. 1. "Bring Back My Body." Three cheers for
- 2. "The Metal Monster" by E. K. Jarvis. How's 3. "Victory from the Void" by McGivern and
- O'Brien. Pretty darn good combination. 4. "Shadow of the Spider" by Lee Francis. Good job. Francis.
- 5. "The Light that Killed" by Ed Earl Renn.



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6. "The Money Machine" by Clee Garson. 7. "Bill Caldron Goes to the Future" by Paul

8. "The New Adam" hy S. G. Weinboum, Phoney! With the exception of six and seven on my list, your stories were exceptional. More Jarvis and

Miles. Awful?

Lee Francia. Another O'Brien, too. ROBERT WISTEL. 4539 Parker Ave.

Chicago, Illinois. Well, six out of eight exceptional—you are still our friend!-- Ro.

A PROTEST This is a protest against that moronic, have-

brained series of articles known as "Scientific Mysteries" which you have been so misguided as to publish. Such stupidity is remarkable-no, it is unbelievable. Without stooping to think, you take a few shreds of evidence, plus a goodly hunk of imagination, and draw fantastic conclusions, which, if true, would turn our every-day world into a science-fictioneer's conception of Mars.

Take, for instance, your latest in this infamous series, "Totem of the Eagle." You take the fact that the eagle was used as an emblem in Imperial Russia, Greece, and Rome; that eacle feathers were used by two or three races; that feathers were used by the Polish knights and Sioux and Artecs; that winged beings other than birds were depicted by ancient peoples

To these facts you add that the American Iodians of the East trained their hair in what you call a "bird-like" crest. (Do you really think it is hird-like?)

With these facts, and nothing more, you retire to your fabrication room and produce a masterpiece about an "engle-totem." Perhaps you have not heard of the swastike-totem. It was used by the Axtern and other American Indians. At the present time it still survives among the primitive races, particularly near Milwaukee, although formerly it was most used on the coast. It may also he seen to Egyptian designs, ranging from textile designs to temple ornaments. The Eskimos of Greenland also used the swastika. Oddly enough, this totem still survives at the present time in a limited district surrounding Berchtesgaden,

From these facts I derives that one of the following conclusions must be true: 1) That the ancient Egyptians, Agrees, and Eskimos must have been Fascists. 2) That Germany is populated by Agrees, Indians, Eskimos, and Egyptians, 3) It may have been a coincidence, that all used the same design.

H. MALAMUD, I. BERKMAN, H. ROSOVEN, 122 Earnes Place, Bronz, N. Y

Im's it true that when dealing with the part of which there are to few relics, theory enters into reconstruction to a great degree? And isn't it true that these articles serve to arouse discussion and thereby help attain the real truth of the past of mankind? We know that L. Taylor Hansen

plens to publish these articles in book form, and suck a contribution, however erroseaux it may tern out to be, to of great value and interest to science, because of the collection and compilation of many related facts which can then be studied by other scientists and contually may form a definite added link to the past.

As to the reastile, your editor could quote authorities who have deal with this republic at your length, and they do not arrive at your colturions—although times your editor in a former Missuakeon kinestly, or might agree that those primitive peoples are no proof of anything even if they do use the trustillan-and builder they don't use 11, but a reserved form, which is somethis could different, so accuracy to

thing quits different, we assure you.

Perhops we will run an article in the future on
the sunstike.—Eo.

Sin: REPAID

Burroughs' "Skedston Men of Jugiter" and Weinhausk' "The New Adam" more than republied Weinhausk' "The New Adam" more than republied the magazine's selling price. Two masterpieces of science fection would hardly describe them. I can only say that I regret I had not obtained a copy of "The New Adam" when it was originally published in hook form. I didn't know what I was mixing. As for Burroughs, he is always most

was mosing. As for Burroughs, he is alwa welcome. FRANK RABORN, PVT.

Casual Co. No. 1, CAS.C. Area, Camp Myles Standish, Mass. Many of our resters have apprecial the same

MEET THE AUTHORS

(Concluded from page 231)

passing through the necessary red tape, and went in quest of a job. That was two years ago. Since then I have successively heen an assembler, camera parts inspector, drill press operator, hilling clerk, and order checker for a wholesale mail-

cers, and order checker for a wholesale mailorder house.

At present writing, Fm 21, 6' 4" tall, weigh At 102 lbs, and dingle—though I did have a narrow escape from matital entanglements a short time ago. Fm now pounding out elémen-fiction on a full time hasts—or at least as long as my savings hold out. (Which won't be very long, thanks

some out. Awaren word the very long, thankle to income tax. Sympathetic eithics places made, "Enigma of the City" is an example of the kind of word. Take to do-estrong, simple, human satisfies of word. Take to do-estrong, simple, them are place, and the problem of the problem



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CORRESPONDENCE

CORNER

Jay Chidsey, Green Springs, Otho, 14 years of ann. would like to correspond with interesting

people. He is especially interested in chemistry would like old issues of AS. FA. and other s mass, to buy . . . not trade . . . Nora Carrell Gen Del. Chouteau, Okla., would like to hear from boys in the atmed forces from 18 to 20 years of age. She is 5'456" tell, has brown ever and hair. Will proper all letters reconcily Russell Wilsey, 27-22-252 Street, Bellerose, New York, N. Y., has the complete "John Cartes on Mars" series with the exception of two, "Thuvis. Maid of Mars." and "The Chessman of Mars." He will trade any of the former for the latter. He would also like to obtain the following quarterlies: Fall AMAZING and FANTASTIC and the summer AMAZING. . . . Miss Tedde Marsh, 1435-36 St., Brooklyn, N. Y., would like

to correspond with how in all branches of the

service. She is 21 years of age. . . . Jesse Hendrix, P. O. Box 321, Marked Tree, Ark., wants to contact readers of S-F mags interested in correspondence. . . . Pvt. Eugene Baxter, 918 T.S.S. Flight 23C, AAF, BT.C., Clearwater, Florida, 21, 5'8", blond and weighs 160 lbs. Is in training as a Glider Pilot. Would like to hear from oiris between the ages of 17 and 21. . . . Richard L. Stucke, 99 Summer St., Watertown, Mass. 18. S'1156" tell brown eyes and hair. Will answer all leaters from those over fifteen. Tames Warren Harris, Potrero, Cahf., is anxious to hear from any one interested in mental telepathy, the power of thought broadcasting, etc. He is 27 years old and will answer all letters . . . Charles R. Maytum, 100 Wayne St., Providence, R. L. has AMAZING STORIES from Dec. '30 to Dec. '42 for sale. He also has three quarterlies. He is also interested in hors saving unused II. S. stamos to trade or hove or girls saving mixed stamps which he can sell to them for very low prices. . . . Howard Moore, 12210 Meyers Rd., Detroit, Mich., would like to hear from all interested in becoming members of his recently founded club dealing with witchcraft, ghosts, mental telerathy, and other psychic phenomena. He will be glad to answer all questions and will reply to all letters immediately. Anyone between 15-19 everywhere welcome. He would also like correspondence with anyone on any subject. . . . D. H. Remany, Niche, No. Dak, wants information on science fiction authors. The name of each; year of hirth and death, if dead; names of a few of his works, and characteristics. . . . Joseph M. Vallin, Jr., 5809-J3 St., Washington, D. C. has the following Burroughs' books for sale: Carson of Venus Pirates of Venus. A Fighting Man of Mars, Targan and the Lost Empire, Tanar of Pellucidar and Tarran and the Ant Men. They are all in good condition. Price is 50c each or will trade. . . . George C. Price, 5 Stearns St., Massens, N. Y., wants readers to send 100 different stamps and 3-cent stamp. Will return 150 different, same quality. Send larger packages in same ratio if desired. Will answer all writers at once. . . Eddy Moulire, Gervanio 107. Hahana, Cuha, a Cuhan young man, 17 years old, wants to correspond with American young people. He will answer all letters promot. ly. He will write in Spanish, English, French,

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STORIES of the STARS

-- By MORRIS J. STEELE --

Vega, In Lyra, The Harp

Vega is the star toward which our solar system is maving. It is 25 light years away, and the fourth brightest in the heavens (See beck cover)

YRA, the Harp, is a constellation in the northern hemisphere, and is most easily observed in the mouth of August. It is delinquised by the brilliant star, Vrga, brightest in the southern hemisphere, and fourth brightest in the sky. The same Vrga is a remnant of an Arabo; pursue sensing "falling eagle." Mate (in Augula), is a similar remnant of "flying eagle" and apparently the two are related in legend.

Technically, the star B. Lyrae is an eclipsing variable with a period of 12-92 days. E Lyrae is a double-double star (a blancular; or even the eye, shows a double star which can only be loosely connected, and a small telescope resolves the pair

into two components).

Because of the very low densities of the two components, the system presents some very edd testures which have drawn the interest of astronomers for many years of observation.

The Ring Nebula in Lyra (Measier 57), is the largest and brightest of this type of nebula, and merits all the attention given it. The Britamica gives Messier 57 as a ring nebula and Charles A Comng, Ph.D., L.L.D. calis it an annual nebula, but qualifies it by saying it can be discerned in a small telescope as a small bary ring.

Vega itself is a plant white or blue star, certainly many times larger than our own sun, and it is twenty-five light years away and gives out forty-five times as much light.

Our solar system is traveling directly toward this star at the rate of four miles per second. The constellation is composed of Beta, Gamma, Epilon and Zeta, in addition to Vega. Epilen and Zeta are fourth magnitude stars: Reta (a

variable) and Gamma are third magnitude stars.
There are other minor stars in the group.
According to the legends, Lyra is the lyre of
Orpheus with which he charmed the stern gods of
the lower world and persuaded them to restore to
him his lost Eurodice.

Artist Frank R. Paul has painted his conception of a scene on one of the planets that circle Vega, and given his impression of the inhabitants and mode of his of those inhabitants.

Giant Vega, so brilliant that human eyes could mot look upon it, would leom vastly in the sky, and queer halo effects might he observed by the clash of the light of the double-stars and the beavy, gas-allied atmospher's effect on filtering.

The sky might be a brilliant yellow in color, caused by chemicals and gasons elements in sospension in it. This planet would be a very active one, and constant equitions and the week of gygers of both melted rocks and metals and water vapor would sculpture the handscape into fantsatte shapes.

Thus persers would form huge cone of activi-

and changing the light.

ifted materials of brilliant colors. Their vapers would form amazing plumes above them. All moisture would come from the seeam thrown out in this manner, and its condensation would form local rains which would water the hot-house type of vegetation which could easily grow bere

out in this manner, and its condensation would feem local rains which would water the hot-house type of vegetation which could easily grow here in prefusion, providing both food and materials feer abelier for the inhabitants. Hot worlds tend to develop either huge monster life, or insect life. On the world circling Vega, with its low density, the probability would be

definitely on the side of insect life rather than natural. Thus we would find that the inhabitant of 1 lish weed would be gindt intenct, capable of carrying a human bring on its hard-shelled back. These insects would be unlike Earth insects insofar as the ability to think independently is concreted. They would be human-like in this raspect, possessing good reasoning power.

Thus they would be ables to turn to their own.

use, other, has intelligent insects which would also develop as a result of the presence of vast vegetation areas. These might be huge here which could be housed in giant hives and made to produce a food staple of honey taken from the giant orthists of the Vegna jumples. The inabilitarius of this world would live mostly underground, in huge hurrow-like cities con-

structed largely without the use of machinery, since insects are able to dig very well with mandibles and armored legs.

There would be no need to best these underrearth cities, since a rold climate would be un-

known.

Although this planet might be hundreds of times larger than Earth, an Earthman visiting it would not wrigh too much to move around hecause of the low gravity attraction due to much less density. In fact, he might have troulle re-

e maining on the surface—even of seeming rock.

g For this world is very unstable indeed.

210

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by Dr. Marie Stones

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